THE OCEAN ROVERS



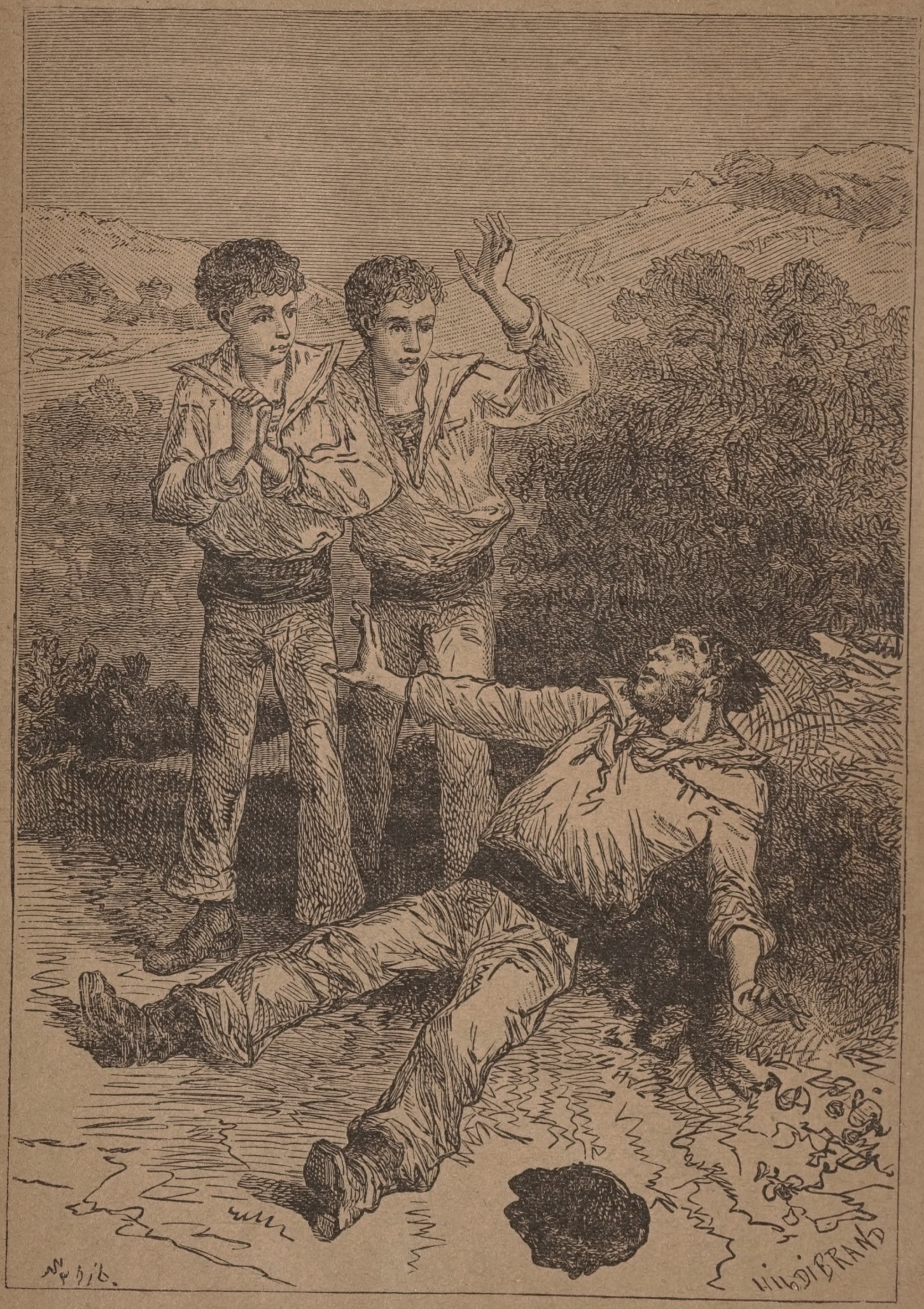
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"At last Dominic slowly opened his eyes." — Page 320.

THE OCEAN ROVERS;

OR

TWO CABIN BOYS.

BY

LOUIS ROUSSELET,

AUTHOR OF "THE CONSTABLE'S SON."

With Forty-six Illustrations.

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"Two men were sitting on the cliff."

THE TWO CABIN BOYS.

CHAPTER I.

A NIGHT ON CAPE CERBERUS.

Not a breath of wind rippled the surface of the sea. The day had been burning hot, the heavens were like brass; but as the sun plunged beneath the liquid horizon, light flakes floated upwards, and soon swelling to clouds, concealed the sinking luminary. Spreading in every direction, like the branches of a gigantic tree, these clouds rapidly covered the whole western sky, which kindled into a vast and sublime conflagration.

The sun had disappeared from sight, but the radiance of its setting still tinged the ragged cliffs of Cape Cerberus with a thousand varied hues.

This rocky giant, the advance sentry of the Pyrenees, guards the French and Spanish frontier. The waves of the Mediterranean bathe its tremendous spur, while its jagged peaks extend to the Alberes Mountains, dividing Roussillon from Catalonia.

In old times no sailor ever passed the cape without throwing into the sea some offering for the tutelary genius of the spot, for every one knew that it was thus that Orpheus appeased the guardian of Hell, and this Cerberus of the sea seemed no whit less terrible. No vessel could gain the safe shelter of Venus' lovely harbor, the present Port Vendres,[1] without weathering these dangerous rocks, compared in fable to the teeth of a ferocious dog. In our day, steamboats pass scornfully by this Cerberus; but more than one sailing vessel, flying the storm, is still crushed in its hideous jaws.

On the day of which we write, the guardian of the sea slumbered, and the waves played silently amid his teeth. A few white-sailed feluccas carelessly skirted along the line of rocks, borne onward by the light breeze which had sprung up.

Two men, sitting on the cliffs which overhung the shore, seemed lost in admiration of the sublime spectacle of the setting sun. Both wore the elegant dress of the Catalan mountaineer,—the velvet jacket, long red cap, tight-fitting breeches, and gaiters with bright metal buttons. Their

[1] Portus Veneris, the Port of Venus.

feet were shod with sandals made of rope, most convenient for mountain climbing, and quite indispensable in a region where there are no roads but those worn by wandering goats. Yet these men were heavily loaded, to judge by the packages which they had thrown down beside them when they paused to rest.

One of them was also equipped with a rifle, which now lay at his feet. A short, thick black beard encircled his face, which was as brown as that of an Arab, and was lighted up by a pair of wild, fierce eyes. Although small of stature, his whole person was expressive of strength and vigor.

His companion was almost a child, a youth of fifteen years, and offered the strongest contrast to him. Long, silky, chestnut curls hung about a face of almost feminine oval, and were it not for his dare-devil look, he might have passed for the prisoner rather than the comrade of the gloomy ruffian.

"Come, Daniel," suddenly exclaimed the latter, interrupting the revery in which the youth seemed lost; "the sun has set. It is time we were on our way. Night will soon overtake us. In a few moments it will be as dark as a pocket. Had I foreseen such weather, we might have taken the other road without fear of pursuit. We risk our necks by trying to cross Cape Cerberus on such a night as this."

"This road does not frighten me a bit," replied the

youth. "I have gone over it twenty times on the darkest nights; to be sure, I had an easy conscience. But cheer up, Mateo, the stars will lend us their light."

"The stars? You'll need good eyes to see them to-night. Look down at that ship; you can just see the sails; it dances as if the sea ran high already out yonder. In an hour, I shall wish it well off Cape Cerberus; for the mistral[1] will blow, and it won't be pleasant so near the rocks."

"Perhaps you are right," said Daniel. "Come on, let us be off." And, stooping, he picked up his load, which he bound firmly about his loins with a belt, in such a way that it should not interfere with his entire freedom of motion. His companion did the same, slung his rifle over his shoulder, and the two travellers set out on their journey.

As Mateo supposed, the last rays of the setting sun had scarcely faded when the mistral began to blow, and the sky was covered with black clouds. Soon, rain began to fall in fine streams and the darkness became profound.

Any other than a mountaineer, finding himself on Cape Cerberus at such a time, must have perished, for the rain made the rocks slippery and darkness hid the precipices. The least misstep might be fatal. Even our two travellers advanced with the utmost precaution, and, after travelling two long hours, found themselves scarcely a league removed from their last halting-place. Heavily loaded

[1] Northwest wind, which blows very severely in the Mediterranean.



"The least misstep might be fatal." — Page 13.

as they were, they were yet forced to make tremendous exertions to scale the rocks, and to stand upright against the wind on the slippery ascent. Both of them had fallen more than once, but luckily without sustaining serious injury. They were utterly exhausted.

"May the deuce take the custom-house officers, the police, and all their confounded brood!" muttered Mateo. "I can go no farther. Let us stop here."

Without loosing his burden, he dropped down upon a rock, streaming with rain.

"Are we near the frontier?" asked Daniel, throwing himself upon the ground.

"We must have crossed it quarter of an hour ago. We shall be safe and sound at Banyuls by eleven o'clock."

"But are n't we safe and sound here?" said the boy.

"Of course; or at least pretty nearly so. Still, you know that we must keep our eyes open till the end of our journey is reached."

"Oh!" cried Daniel, "I begin to repent that I listened to your proposals and followed you."

"Come, come, a little courage! Hang it, what do you mean? The business is n't always so bad. We don't often have such wretched luck. The weather is severe —"

"Oh, what do I care for the weather!" interrupted the boy. "But when I think that I may be arrested at any moment, — I, Daniel Riva —"

"There, let's have no more of these airs," said the ruffian

angrily. "They won't go down with me. Everybody hereabouts knows what a scamp Daniel Riva is. Don't every one tell of the tricks that you played at Perpignan School, where your father managed to get you taken in? and don't we all know that you were expelled in disgrace? Come, come, my fine fellow, you must lower your crest!"

"Yes, that is all very true," replied the young man; "I am a wild fellow; I deserve all the evil that is said of me; but I have never before committed any action which would bring a blush to the cheek of my father, the most respected man in Castel, while now—"

"Well, do you mean to say that I am less honest than you are, or less respectable than your father? Every one salutes Mateo Puig as he goes along the road; perhaps because they fear him, but they salute him all the same. Besides, the Puigs are quite as good a family as the Rivas; and we are not disgraced, as far as I can see, because we do a little smuggling. The government robs us when it sells tobacco for twice what it is worth. Well, we go into Spain to buy it at a lower price. What harm is there in that? At the same time, we bring a little back for our friends. Is there anything dishonest in sharing with your friends? To be sure, the custom-house officers want to take away our tobacco without paying us for it; and as that would n't be agreeable to us, we keep as far away from them as possible. That don't strike me as any-

thing out of the way. And then, when we deliver our tobacco to Mr. Destory at Banyuls, he will give us each ten dollars, and with these ten dollars you can go to town and buy yourself a new jacket, play the dandy, eh! Isn't that worth taking a little trouble for, Master Daniel? Speak out and give us your opinion."

"I think," said the boy, "that I was a fool to be led astray by you, and that this will be the last as well as the first time that I follow you into the mountains."

"People always say that at the time, but they change their mind."

"I swear that I will never change," eagerly cried the youth, "and I shall always repent that I ever violated the laws of my country."

"Ah ha!" exclaimed the smuggler, "any one would know that you were a scholar, you use such high-sounding phrases. Repent, indeed; that was the only thing wanting!" And the smuggler burst into a fit of hoarse laughter.

At the same moment a whistle echoed shrilly through the mountains. At the sound, Mateo turned pale. Starting to his feet, he seized Daniel by the arm, muttering in accents of stifled rage: "Plague take you and your evil forebodings! If you had n't my tobacco on your back, I don't know that anything would prevent me from throwing you into the sea."

The terrified boy had risen and stood motionless, striv-

ing to pierce the darkness behind him, as if to fly in that direction.

"You need n't look behind you, my boy," said Mateo savagely. "I know the tricks of the excisemen. If we turn back, we shall only be caught by the Spanish, instead of the French, and they would scarcely be any more civil to us."

"Then what shall we do, dear Mateo?" said the trembling boy.

"Ah! I'm your dear Mateo, am I, now that I alone can save you. Listen, there is but one way of escape. Do you know the path down to Banyuls, which runs along the edge of the cliff?"

"Perfectly well."

"Very well," replied the smuggler, "it must be close at hand. We must find it, and then, once there, take to our heels and put our best foot foremost, at the risk of breaking our necks; but remember, whatever happens to you, do not stop."

A few minutes later, climbing over the rocks, the two had found the path; then hastened forward as best they might. It was a mad, reckless flight, over rocks and rolling stones; but Daniel never paused, flying rather than running, and leaving his less active comrade far behind.

Suddenly, close beside him, a loud voice, issuing from the thicket, called out, "Halt, or I fire!"

"Run!" cried Mateo at the same moment.

Unnecessary advice, for the boy, spurred on by terror, never paused. Two shots flashed across his path, and a bullet hissed by his ear, but he still ran on. Another shot was heard instantly, followed by a piercing cry. The youth no longer ran, but plunged madly forward. Soon he heard the noise of pursuing footsteps. His heart beat wildly, his legs tottered beneath him; he knew that he should be arrested. A voice fell upon his ear, — the voice of Mateo!

"Halt!" cried the smuggler, who soon caught up with him. "Oh, you can rest a little now, they are not on our track. The rascal who fired at you has paid for his audacity, and his comrade has his hands full in taking care of him, without troubling himself about us."

"What," exclaimed the terrified boy, "have you killed him?"

"Perhaps so; what if I have?" was the indifferent answer. "He began it."

"Ah, wretch, miserable assassin!" indignantly cried Daniel; and with an abrupt motion tearing off the burden bound upon his back, he threw it at the feet of the astonished Mateo, and resumed his flight, sobbing as he vanished in the darkness.



"Daniel seized a hanging rope."

CHAPTER II.

THE RESCUE.

THE village of Castel, the southernmost point of France, consists merely of a few poor fishers' huts, built among the rocks of Cape Cerberus, and at the head of a sheltered bay, half a league from Banyuls.

Thither Daniel's father, Peter Riva, retired with his wife and only child, after thirty years' service as keeper of the lighthouse at Cette. He resumed the work of his boyhood, fishing; and the produce of his toil, together

with a small pension of six hundred francs made him the richest man of the village, as his kindness, his courage, and his honesty made him the most respected.

Thanks to the influence of friends, he obtained a free scholarship for his son at Perpignan, hoping eventually to get him a position in the navy, a service in which he had many friends. We already know how his hopes were disappointed.

Daniel, being expelled from school for misconduct, returned to the village, where his father strove to continue his education, and to prepare him for a sailor's life. But the boy was as rebellious to his father as he had been to his teachers. He usually spent his days roaming in the mountains, setting traps for birds, which he sold in town; or if the game proved shy, lying on a rock in the sunshine for hours at a time, busied only with whistling and building castles in the air. For if Daniel was lazy, he was none the less ambitious. The society of his school-mates, who belonged to wealthy families, made his home seem very poor and wretched, and he dreamed of rising far above it, and gaining power and riches. He cared little what means he employed to reach this end, so he might be his own master and have no one but himself to obey.

And yet he was by no means a bad boy. He included his beloved parents in all his dreams of sudden grandeur, especially his poor mother, whose blind love was his best

protection. When he came home after one of his reckless escapades, he was easily melted by his father's reproaches, promised his mother that he would reform, and for a few days went fishing with his father, or devoted himself to his lessons, if the weather were bad; but his manly disposition never long endured this unwonted restraint.

"That boy is the worst fellow in the village," said the priest to Daniel's mother; "he'll come to some bad end. He has never once been to church since he left school, although I often meet him in the street on Sunday, hanging about the tavern, and indeed I've seen him go in."

The mother burst into tears at the recital of her boy's misdeeds, and his father swore that if there were not a speedy change for the better, he would break every bone in the body of his son and heir. In spite of severe punishment, often repeated, Daniel did not improve; and at the time of which we write, he had been absent from home for three days, his parents not knowing what had become of him.

The storm now raged furiously. The clouds, driven by the wind, scudded across the sky, and torrents of rain fell amid the darkness of the night. The roaring sea broke fiercely on the shore, the foaming breakers seeming every moment about to sweep away the poor huts of Castel. The fishers shut up within listened anxiously to the various terrible sounds of the tempest, rejoicing that the fine

weather during the day had not tempted them to set sail.

Peter and Antoinette Riva, seated by the fire, sad and alone, awaited the return of their son. "You were too hard on him, Peter," said the mother at last, interrupting a long silence. "Daniel is very hot-headed. God knows whether we shall ever see him again."

"What would you have, wife?" replied Peter, "I must correct him. It's as painful to me as it is to you, but it's my duty; I can't let him go to the bad without one effort to stop him."

"True," said the mother, "but matters are not so serious yet. Daniel is thoroughly honest; his only fault is that he gives us so much worry and pain."

"Yes, I admit that; his faults are the faults of youth, but they soon lead to worse things, and a boy is more easily led astray in this village than in any other that I know of. The frontier is so near at hand, and swarms with ne'er-do-wells who may carry off our boy any day. I must put a stop to it; and to cut short his frolics, I have decided to send him to sea. When he has served a few years on some good merchantman, and has had a few smart lashes from the cat-o'-nine-tails, he will learn what discipline means."

"He is very young still," timidly remarked the poor mother, who shivered whenever her husband mentioned this dreadful subject. She shed many tears when she had

to send her son to school, but it was too much for her to bear, to send him to sea. Who knew if the sea would ever restore him to her!

"Too young, at fifteen?" replied Peter. "At his age, I had served as cabin boy for two years on board my father's coasting-vessel. Let me tell you, I only regret not sending him sooner. I have done everything that I could to smooth his entrance into a career which cost me a hard struggle and in which I was never able to attain any rank. I sent him to school, and accordingly he thinks himself a gentleman; that was his ruin. He must go at once!"

Antoinette made no answer; she bowed her head and tears trickled down her cheeks. Her husband, more deeply moved than he was willing to show, began to poke the fire violently. At that moment a sudden blast of wind shook the house, which trembled in every beam as if it would fall to pieces. The door flew open and the light was blown out, while sparks from the fire flew about the room.

"Good Heavens!" cried Antoinette, springing to her feet in alarm.

Peter rose calmly, closed the door and barred it, then relighted the candle.

"I thought it was he," said the wife. "Lord! what a storm! Where can he be in this weather?"

"Don't be worried about him," replied Peter. "He is doubtless quietly seated in some tavern, playing checkers

with some other rascal. I feel much more concerned about that fine ship which we saw sailing by this evening; if it has not yet reached Port Vendres, it will be in a bad fix, overtaken by such weather so near the coast."

"My poor boy!" murmured the mother. And silence again reigned within, while without the awful voice of the tempest was heard in deafening accents.

The poor woman listened eagerly to every sound. "I think some one knocked at the door," said she suddenly.

"Nonsense," said Peter, "it is the wind." But at the same moment, several hasty knocks shook the thick wooden shutter.

"Who is there?" cried the fisherman.

"It is I, Daniel," was the reply.

With one bound, Antoinette reached the door and opened it. Her son, his face haggard, his clothes dripping with water, rushed into the room. His mother stretched out her arms to him, exclaiming: "Oh! the poor fellow!" But he, without pausing, hastened to his father, who had not risen from his seat, and, throwing himself on the ground, clasped his knees, sobbing convulsively.

The youth usually returned with downcast look and piteous mien; but he had never shown such ready repentance before. The fisherman was, therefore, greatly struck by this strange demeanor, and said in a severe tone: "Well, Daniel, is this the way to return to your father's house?"

"Forgive me, forgive me, for I am very unhappy!" sobbed the boy.

"Where have you been? What have you done?" continued Peter.

"Promise that you will have mercy," said the youth, "and I will tell you all."

"Forgive him!" entreated the mother, clasping her hands.

"I must hear the whole story first," cried the angry father, who had risen and seized a stick, as if about to execute summary justice. "Then we shall see what I will do." Just at this moment a dull explosion echoed above the tumult of the storm; at the same time the door was again thrown open, showing on the threshold a fisherman dressed in oil-skins, a sou'wester on his head.

"Peter Riva," cried the man, "don't you hear the minute guns? There's a ship going to pieces on the rocks off Cape Cerberus. Quick, to the boats! Time presses; we are only waiting for you." And he shut the door behind him.

"Come, wife, make haste, give me my tarpaulins and boots. I must be off," said Peter.

Daniel sprang to his feet. "And I?" he asked.

"You? You are no sailor," said his father dryly.

"Forgive me, father!" begged the boy. "Take me with you!"

"Very well, so be it. Come on, we'll postpone our reckoning until to-morrow." In the twinkling of an eye

the two were ready for any weather and left the house. Antoinette called after them a warning to be prudent, and then, as they went out into the squall, she threw herself on her knees to pray for them.

Every able-bodied man in Castel was on the beach, helping to launch two large ships' boats, furnished with ropes, grapnels, and life-preservers. One of these boats, manned by four sailors, was commanded by John Cerdagnol, the pilot; the other awaited its captain, Peter Riva. No sooner did he appear, followed by his son, than John called out: "Make haste and get under way, Peter! There is no time to lose; they have ceased to fire the cannon, and all their lights are out but the lantern on the foretop-mast."

A faint red star was indeed dimly visible, shining through fog and darkness, and seeming to mark the position of the luckless vessel.

Peter and his son were soon in their places, and both boats rapidly rowed away from the beach, — no easy matter, as the wind was against them and the waves ran tremendously high. Finally, the surf was passed, and the men left behind on shore lost sight of the boats amid the tempest.

How wonderful are the courage and self-sacrifice of the unknown heroes who daily risk their lives to rescue their fellow-men! Not one of the twelve who thus braved the dangers of a furious sea, on a coast bristling with hidden rocks and reefs, hesitated for an instant. Each, at the first

signal of danger, hastened to meet death if need be, with calm abnegation, with a deep and simple sense of duty, — a feeling which no soldier can know in spite of all his heroism, because he serves a less noble cause.

To reach the rock upon which the unfortunate ship was stranded, the boats must first stand out to sea to avoid being swept away by the current, and then drift slowly in among the rocks. Notwithstanding the skill and coolness of the two pilots, and in spite of the zeal of the rowers, it was a difficult task. The brave fellows wrestled with the waves for nearly an hour before they saw the wreck in front of them, now dark and silent. No light shone from the hulk, no human voice issued from its breast. The implacable sea, rushing upon its motionless prey, fast upon the rocks, wrapped it in a whirlpool of foaming surge.

It seemed a bold undertaking to approach this lifeless mass, now the most dangerous of spots. And yet the sailors resolved to make the attempt. While John Cerdagnol ran along on the starboard side, Peter Riva daringly steered his boat for the larboard wall. Getting close up to it, he saw that it would be impossible for him to board the vessel, whose stern, half under water, was washed by huge waves. He then ordered his men to cry aloud in concert to attract the attention of the shipwrecked sailors; but no voice responded to their repeated shouts. John joined them, after making the circuit of the ship with no better success.

"We are too late," cried Peter. "The poor fellows could not wait for our tardy aid. God grant they may have managed to reach the shore!"

"Scarcely likely," replied John. "If the poor wretches took to their boats, as seems most likely, for the davits are empty, and if they made for the Cape, they must needs have been ground to bits on the rocks. You know as well as I do that the sea beats on the cliff with such fury that it washes away great pieces at every storm."

"In that case, my brave fellows," said Riva, with a sigh, "nothing is left for us but to return home as best we may. Let us all shout together once more to make sure that no one remains on board." A long, loud shout rose from the two boats, but not a sound responded. "Give way, boys!" said Peter.

Daniel rose. "Shall we leave this ship so readily?" he asked.

"What would you have us do?" replied his father. "I warrant you that by to-morrow morning Cerberus will have devoured her, and all her planks will be upon the beach."

"That is not what troubles me," said Daniel; "but if some one should happen to have been left on board, some sick person for instance, ought we to leave him in this heartless way?"

"Of course not," said Peter; "but unfortunately there is not a soul. The poor fellows are all gone, and I cannot

risk the lives of our comrades on so ill-founded a supposition. You see that it would be impossible to board the vessel."

"Let me try, father."

"But it would be sheer madness, certain death."

"You know how nimble I am," persisted Daniel. "Bring your boat close under the bowsprit. I will surely find some fragment of shroud by which I can haul myself up to the deck."

"Let the boy go," cried John, stepping in. "Then he'll feel easy, and he may perhaps save the ship's cat; it will bring him luck."

Peter, without another word, brought his boat under the bowsprit, which the position of the ship threw high into the air. Watching a favorable moment, Daniel seized a hanging rope, and, pulling himself up hand over hand, disappeared in the rigging.

"Make haste!" cried his father. "We cannot wait long."

Once on deck, Daniel, clinging to the fragments of the masts which covered it, contrived to gain the forecastle. The door of the storeroom was open. He put his head in and called loudly several times. Nothing stirred. The young man then followed the nettings, and with some difficulty reached the quarter-deck, where the state-rooms of officers or passengers would be. The mainmast in its fall had broken in the roofing of the cabin-deck, and a tangled mass of cords obstructed the entrance. Daniel crept in on

all fours and renewed his shouts. The whistling of the wind through the gaping partitions was his only answer.

"Decidedly there is no one here," muttered the boy; and he was about to retrace his steps, when he fancied he heard a feeble groan. He eagerly listened, and soon distinguished plainly these words, uttered in a faint voice: "Help! help!"

He could no longer doubt that his heart had inspired him aright; some poor wretch had been abandoned here. Proceeding cautiously, he made his way into the room, which was filled with ruins and rubbish of all sorts. "Help!" again cried the voice.

"Courage! I am here," replied Daniel. "Can you not come to me?"

"I cannot move," murmured the unknown. "I think my chest is crushed."

Guided by the sound, the young man advanced; soon his outstretched hands touched a human body, half buried beneath broken timbers. After great effort, he succeeded in freeing the poor fellow; then, taking him in his arms, dragged him out.

"Help! help!" he cried at the top of his lungs. The noise of the storm drowned his voice. He tried to lift the unknown man upon his back, but his strength was insufficient. At last, by straining every nerve, he contrived to raise the heavy body, and gently dragged it to the bow. He then heard voices calling: "Daniel! Daniel!"

"Help!" replied the boy. "I've got one! Help!"

A moment later two sailors stood beside him. They made the shipwrecked man fast to a rope, and carefully lowered him into one of the boats. Daniel left the ship, silently resumed his seat on the thwart, and they started for the shore.

Day was dawning, the east was tinged with rosy hues; as if the approaching sun set the storm to flight, the wind fell and the sea grew calm. On the beach at Castel, the wives of the sailors with the old men and children, anxiously awaited the life-boats. Their crews were hailed with loud cries of joy. The men were surrounded and embraced; questions and answers crowded one upon another. The poor sufferer was landed with the greatest precautions.

"Let him be taken to my house," said Peter Riva. And the fisherman went silently home, followed by his son, whom the good mother smothered with kisses and tears. When they reached the door he turned gravely, and, opening his arms, said in a voice broken by emotion: "Come to my arms, Daniel! Whatever you may have done, I forgive you."



"Take the portfolio."

CHAPTER III.

DEATH OF THE SHIPWRECKED MAN.

THE castaway was soon snugly lodged in the best room which the house afforded, the master's own chamber. Peter Riva rubbed him vigorously, made him swallow a good glass of brandy, put him to bed, and then sent a sailor in all haste to the neighboring town, to bring the doctor back. The wounded man, reviving momentarily on reaching the house, had exchanged a few words with Peter, and immediately fallen into an alarming state of torpor and unconsciousness. The fisherman directed his son to watch the patient, while he himself went with friends to see if any portion of the cargo of the wreck might be saved.

Daniel accordingly seated himself by the bedside. His mother had gone out to buy some necessary supplies. He

was alone, and at last free to think; but the events of this awful night had followed each other in such rapid succession that his weary brain could scarcely consider them in due order. The ascent of Cape Cerberus, the storm, the meeting with the custom-house officers, Mateo's crime! That crime! How should he ever dare confess his share in it to his father? How could he excuse himself? And if he should be pursued? If he were arrested? Ah! why did he not find death in the bosom of the waves! Was it not with this hope, as much as from a desire to atone for his fault, that he had so boldly risked his life to save the unfortunate man lying by his side? But his courage could not purchase his pardon. The officers would surely come and carry him off to prison; and then, what a disgrace to his father, what a grief to his mother! At this thought he hid his face in his hands and gave free course to the tears that choked him.

A faint voice made him lift his head. The wounded man had opened his eyes, and was gazing fixedly at him.

"What ails you, my child?" said the stranger.

"Nothing, sir," was the reply. "All that has happened to-night has upset me, and I don't know why, but I can't restrain my tears."

"That's very natural," said the sick man; "such events make a strong impression at your age. But come closer, I beg; my voice fails me."

Daniel drew nearer, and the man, taking the boy's hands

in his own, said in feeble tones: "My voice is going rapidly, and there is no time to be lost. Death is fast approaching, and I have much to say to you before I die."

"Let me call my father," said the boy, startled by this preamble. "He can advise you better than I."

"Not at all, it is useless," replied the stranger. "I know that it was you who saved my life; and although you are but a child, to you I will confide the last favor which I shall ask of mortal man. I have fully considered what I am about to do. Just now, when you thought me asleep, I merely closed my eyes that I might have time for reflection. Listen attentively, for on what I tell you will depend the future peace and prosperity of those I love."

He paused for some moments, as if exhausted by the effort which he had made, asked for a few drops of brandy, which seemed to restore his strength, then went on in a firmer voice: —

"My past history concerns you little, and yet you must know it, hard as it is for me to confess my wickedness. My name is Bastien Moreau, I was born at Narbonne, forty years ago this very day. My family was one of the most honorable in the city. Having finished my studies, I entered the marines, and when I was captain, married a young girl from Cette. Two years later we had a child, a daughter. My wife, loath to let me leave her for Senegal, where I was ordered, begged me to quit the service. I

reluctantly agreed and obtained a humble post in the harbor service, as cashier of a shipping office. My tastes were modest, my daughter grew rapidly, fortune smiled upon me, when one day — accursed day! — a demon lured me to my ruin. I had kept up my friendship with some of my former comrades, and often went to a club frequented by the officers and young men of the town. One evening I was urged to play cards; I lost a considerable sum, and went home in despair. To pay this debt, I helped myself from the funds entrusted to my care. To my mind it was but a temporary loan, and I felt sure that I should make up the deficiency by selling some stock, my only property. What was my horror, when I returned from paying the amount lost the previous night, to hear that the naval inspector had arrived during my absence, and was even then examining my accounts. How could I explain the deficiency which he would find? I was ruined, dishonored. I lost my head, and, mad with despair, I fled hastily, without even taking leave of wife and child."

The unhappy man hid his face in his hands, as if to conceal his grief and shame.

"But why," he resumed, "rehearse my long expiation? I fled to America, where I led an abject and miserable existence, scarcely daring to think of home and country. At last I learned that my name was dishonored; that my wife and daughter had been received into my brother-in-

law's home, and were removed from want. I was dead to them. After travelling all over the United States, following many and various trades, I determined to go to Australia and try my fortune in the gold mines, which were then attracting swarms of adventurers. There I was equally unlucky, and, in my despair, weary of life, I was about to put an end to my wretched existence, when an unexpected chance laid at my feet the fortune which I had sought so long. Soon I was rich, I bought vast estates near Melbourne, I was honored and respected. My first thought, when I had money, was to send to Cette the sum which I had embezzled, and at the same time I wrote to my wife, entreating her to come out and join me, as I could not make up my mind to bear the scorn and contempt of those who had known me in earlier days. My brother-in-law answered the letter, perhaps too severely, doubting the truth of the story which I told my wife, and declaring that he could not permit her to rejoin me until he was fully convinced that neither she nor my daughter would have cause to blush for me. In vain I wrote again. I promised to comply with any conditions which they might impose; I could not overcome the scruples of this honest but pitiless man. What did my money avail me then, far from those I loved? I decided to return to France, but with the firm resolve not to remain, but to bring my family back to the new home which contained all my wealth and my estates. I had not heard from my

brother-in-law for more than a month, when I set sail for Cette. Our voyage was prosperous. After a passage of three months, I saw the shores of France yesterday, for the first time since I left them six years ago. We expected to reach port to-day, and I was just thanking God for all his mercies when the storm burst upon us. Knowing all the dangers of this coast, I advised the captain to stand out to sea again, but he did not heed me. The disabled ship was speedily cast upon the rocks by the hurricane. The boats were lowered, and I was about to take my place with the rest, when I remembered that I had left a portfolio, containing most important papers, in my cabin. They promised to wait for me. I hastened back, quickly found the portfolio and was returning, when the main-mast was suddenly snapped in twain, and I was crushed under the ruins of the cabin. My companions, undoubtedly thinking me dead, put out to sea and left me behind."

"Every man must have perished," interrupted Daniel, "for we cannot find a trace of them."

"I should have died, too, had it not been for you," resumed the sufferer. "I learned from your father, whom I once knew very well, although he does not recognize me now, — from him, I say, I learned of your noble conduct. I thank you, not for the life which nothing now can save, but because you have enabled me to die with a mind at ease. I beseech you, my boy, to continue your good

work. To you, my saviour, I confide the last duty of informing my poor wife of my death —"

These words died away on the sick man's lips, and he fell back exhausted.

Daniel felt the hand which he held grow cold. He was about to call for help in terror, when Bastien Moreau reopened his eyes, and whispered: "Take the portfolio from under my pillow."

Daniel put his hand under the pillow, and drew out a bulky black-leather case, with an immense steel clasp.

"That is it," said the dying man. "When you find my wife, give it to her. Your father will let you go to Cette and you will find money for your journey in the portfolio. All the money that it contains is yours, I give it to you. My wife will not need it, for I have sent her plenty from Australia, and she is now rich. I merely require you to deliver the portfolio to her without opening the secret drawer within. It only contains a few valueless trifles, simple keepsakes, which will be precious to my wife, but to no one else. Such is the service which I ask of you. Will you promise to execute the commission faithfully?"

"I promise," said Daniel.

"Very well, my boy, I believe you. A heart like yours cannot lie. But remember the advice of a dying man: In this life, good intentions are nothing, actions only avail,

and the wicked are always punished. My death is a proof of it."

The last words were uttered in so faint a voice that Daniel was forced to lean over the dying man to catch them. Much moved, he still listened, but the voice had ceased. He touched the poor fellow's hands; they were icy. Death had done its work.

Daniel flew to call his father, but just as he reached the door, he heard a voice in the next room, which nailed him to the spot, pale and trembling; it was the well-known voice of the chief of police from Banyuls.

"Then, Mr. Riva," said the officer, "you assure me that your son has not been away from home since yesterday."

"I do," replied Peter firmly. "Have n't you heard that my son was with me last night when I went out with the fishermen of Castel to make an effort to rescue the crew of the Australian ship, cast on the rocks by the storm?"

"I have just seen your neighbor, John Cerdagnol, the pilot, who told me the whole story. He says that Daniel showed the greatest courage, and that, had it not been for his exertions, the poor man whom you have here must have perished, as the ship has been washed to pieces by the waves, and not a fragment remains."

"What did I tell you?" interrupted Peter.

"So," continued the officer, "it was only in the dis-

charge of my duty that I came here, although I this morning received a report from the coast-guard station at Belistres, directing me to cross-examine your son, and, if need be, arrest him."

"What has happened?" asked Riva.

"It seems, —" replied the officer; "but stay, I will read you the report, which I have about me." And drawing a paper from his pocket, he unfolded it and read: —

"'To the Chief of Police: —

"'Some time past the coast-guards stationed on the frontier were informed that a man named Mateo Puig, living at Collioure, was actively engaged in smuggling. He is known to have brought great quantities of tobacco into France. Orders were given at every station that a strict watch should be set upon this audacious smuggler, that he might be caught in the act, if possible. Yesterday, two officers of the station at Belistres, Messrs. Menistrol and Foureyra, were patrolling Cape Cerberus, when they perceived Mateo Puig on the topmost point, accompanied by an unknown youth. Unable to approach these men, who were armed, unseen, the officers took a roundabout course, and came out upon the road leading down to Banyuls, which the smugglers would probably follow. It was very dark, and the rain fell in torrents, when the officers heard the two offenders coming rapidly towards them. They were summoned to surrender, but kept on their

way; upon this the officers fired, but without effect. On the contrary, one of the malefactors returned their shot, and wounded officer Menistrol in the forearm. His comrade's wound and the thick darkness prevented officer Foureyra from following the criminals. He at once reported the case to me, and I warned all the stations, — too late, however, for I learn that the aforesaid Mateo Puig escaped into Spain this morning unmolested. I myself examined the two officers, one of whom thinks that he recognized Mateo Puig's companion as the son of Peter Riva, the pilot of Castel; he cannot, however, swear to the fact, and says that he may have been mistaken. Please go to Castel and make an inquiry into the conduct of this young man, who, we hear, bears a very bad reputation. If the facts justify our suspicions, you will communicate with the court at Banyuls, which will act accordingly.

"'P. MOLITG.

"'*Officer in command*
of the coast-guard station.

"'BELISTRES STATION, June 12, 1863.'"

"Well," said Peter Riva quietly, "what does this amount to? The officers made a mistake. My son was here with me last night, so he could not have been with Mateo, and I am very sorry that Mateo was not arrested."

"After your statement, Mr. Riva," replied the officer, "I can only beg you to excuse me and withdraw."

"There is nothing to excuse," said Peter. "You have only done your duty, officer, and I bear you no grudge."

The officer saluted him and withdrew, closing the door behind him. No sooner was Peter alone than he fell heavily into a chair. His pale face, his haggard, tearless eyes, expressed the deep, intense pain which the officer's story had inflicted.

"What a disgrace!" he muttered. "Peter Riva's son the accomplice of an assassin!" and rising hastily he added: "Perhaps himself an assassin!"

"No, no, father, I am innocent!" cried Daniel, who stood motionless and aghast upon the threshold of the door which he had just opened.

"Unhappy boy! can it be that you have stooped to become the accomplice of Mateo the thief, Mateo the assassin?"

"My fault was no sooner committed than it was repented," said the boy. "I am ready to atone for it as you see fit. You promised to forgive me, but I know that I do not deserve it yet."

"Forgive you! I forgave you for the second time a moment ago," replied Peter, "when I saved you from your just punishment. Do you suppose that it cost me no effort to lie, to declare your innocence, even when I knew, or rather I felt, that you were guilty? I spared you to prevent an infamous stigma from branding my honored name, — the name of my father, and all the honest men

who came before him. You can remain here no longer, you must go. How bitterly I regret that I did not sooner execute this long-plotted purpose! Before to-morrow night you must leave this house, never to return to it until you have proved by your conduct that you are worthy to be called my son."



"Daniel stood motionless."

CHAPTER IV.

A START IN LIFE.

On her return to the house, Mrs. Riva learned from her husband's mouth the death of the shipwrecked man, their guest, and the speedy departure of Daniel. These two pieces of news, coming together, quite upset the poor woman; the latter especially plunged her in the deepest despair, and she went mechanically about her household duties, listening to her husband's explanations the while. "There is no appeal from my decision," concluded Peter. "Daniel goes to-morrow. Prepare his clothes, and above all try to hide your grief from curious eyes."

To turn away any suspicions which Daniel's sudden departure might arouse, the fisherman, when he told his neighbors of the death of his guest, also informed them that the dying man had directed the boy to break the fatal news to his family at Cette.

The doctor, who came from Banyuls in all haste, could only certify to the death; and the very same day, the unfortunate Bastien Moreau was laid in a humble grave in the Castel cemetery. As for the ship, nothing remained of it save a few planks scattered upon the rocks. That evening a broken boat was found near Cape Cerberus, and close by, the bodies of two of the crew, half buried in the sand.

Despite the fatigue of the last twenty-four hours, no one slept that night in the Riva cottage. The mother set silently to work to mend her boy's scanty wardrobe as best she might, while Peter and Daniel, sitting by the fireside, were plunged in a deep revery, and did not exchange a syllable. At last day dawned: all was ready. Daniel put on his sailor's dress, tenderly kissed his poor, heart-broken mother, took his bundle and left the house, his heart full almost to bursting, his eyes dim with tears. His father followed and went with him half way to Banyuls. On reaching a slight ascent overlooking the sea, the fisherman stopped, and opening his arms embraced his son. Tears rolled down his bronzed cheeks, and in a voice choked by emotion, he said: "Come back soon, and be an honest man. Think sometimes of those you have left be-

hind at Castel, whose only happiness and hope you are." Then breaking away hastily, he returned rapidly to the village.

Daniel stood motionless, watching his father as he disappeared in the distance. The sun now gilded the cliffs and the houses nestling at his feet. A few boats leaving port danced across the blue sea. The youth seemed striving to engrave the smiling scene upon his memory. At last, heaving a sigh, he set out, and was soon lost to sight behind the hill, but not without many backward glances at Castel. After walking for half an hour, as he approached Banyuls, he suddenly perceived before him on the road the long shadows of two mounted police coming in his direction. His heart gave a frantic bound; he cast a frightened glance around, and seeing some bushes among the rocks, concealed himself behind them like a criminal. The two riders passed close by his hiding-place without suspecting his presence.

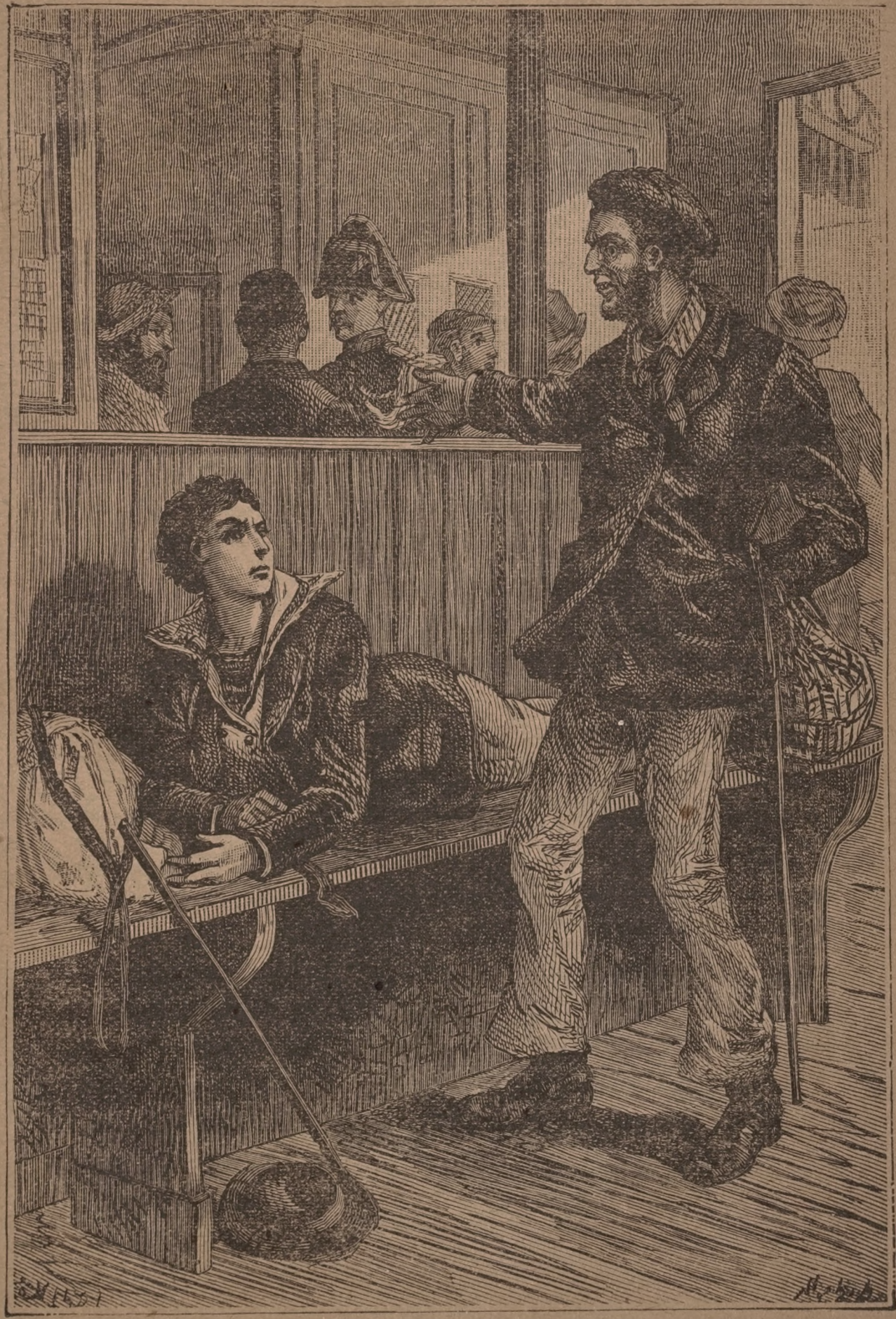
Daniel waited until they were some distance away, then cautiously leaving shelter, he ran on with all his might, crossing the fields and making a long circuit to avoid the town. Not until he thought himself sufficiently far from Banyuls did he venture to stop, panting for breath. "What a fool I am," he thought! "If the policemen had seen me running so fast, it would have been reason enough for them to run after me. My father was quite right to send me away. I know I should have betrayed myself sooner or

later. It is hard to live with a perpetual lie on your lips."

It was late at night when Daniel entered Perpignan; and still, fearing lest one of his former schoolmates should recognize him, he wrapped his cloak about him, and went through the town with a rapid step, only stopping at the railway station, where he found that the last train for Cette had already gone. The next one did not leave until five o'clock next morning.

Determined not to return to town, the boy seated himself in the darkest corner of the waiting-room. His pockets, stuffed with provisions by his mother's prudent hand, provided him with a good meal, and having thus refreshed himself, he lay down on a bench, stretched himself at full length, put his bundle under his head, and soon fell asleep.

His sleep was sound, but troubled by countless dreams, in which his anxious brain rehearsed all the dramatic events of the preceding days. He dreamed that he was lying in ambush by the roadside, with Mateo Puig, waiting to rob and murder the unfortunate Bastien Moreau. The gold-digger fell beneath their blows, he himself seized the portfolio, but Mateo disputed the booty with him. Attacked by the ruffian in his turn, he was about to yield. Stretched on the ground, he saw his enemy's devilish face pressed close to his: another instant and the knife would pierce his heart. He uttered a cry and awoke. Horrors, it was



"Well, young one, I should say that you were a sound sleeper." — Page 51.

not a dream! His half-opened eyes perceived a strange, hairy, shaggy face bending over him.

"Well, young one," said a rough voice, "I should say that you were a sound sleeper."

Daniel, starting up, saw beside him, instead of his savage enemy, a tall fellow, thin and shrivelled, with a face covered with reddish beard, and an equally reddish fur cap on his head. The Mephistophelian stranger smiled, and benevolently showed his long yellow teeth. This smile completely allayed the boy's fears, and he was soon on his feet.

"The train is going, youngster," said the stranger; "you have barely time to buy your ticket. Where are you going, if I may ask?"

"To Cette, sir."

"I guessed as much. So, when I saw you lying there asleep, I said to myself, 'Here's a fellow sleeping as soundly as if he were at a hotel, who will certainly lose his train.' Come, let's make for the ticket-office; we will travel together."

Accepting without more ado the stranger's imperative protection, Daniel went to the ticket-office, bought a ticket for Cette, and, still led by the man with the fur cap, soon found himself seated in a third-class compartment. The stranger closed the door, drew from his pocket a huge pipe, which he stuffed with tobacco and which, speedily lighted, filled the carriage with a cloud of smoke.

"That," said he, with a wink, "is to keep out ladies. Not that I want to be rude, but it is better to express your opinion at once that there may be no mistakes. I smoke and I don't like to be disturbed. And you, young one, do you smoke?"

"No, sir, not yet."

"Not yet? Well, I sha' n't reproach you. It is never too late to begin, and when you 've once begun, it 's too late to leave off. It 's a habit that sticks more closely than most, and it 's a great tax on your pocket." A whistle cut short this moral dissertation, and the train started. "Now we are off," cheerfully remarked the stranger. "If it had n't been for me, you would be still asleep on your bench. So you 're going to Cette?"

"Yes, sir," replied Daniel.

"Listen to me, young one. I like your face, so don't Sir me in that way: call me plain Dominic, — Dominic Martigues, from the port of Marseilles, formerly a sailor on board the Victory, now out of work, returning from a visit to his old mother, and going to Cette to seek a captain. There are my papers: now for yours."

"My name is Daniel Riva," said the young man, completely won by the sailor's eloquence. "My father is a pilot and fisherman at Castel, and I am going to Cette to ship."

"Then, messmate, give us your fist," said Dominic, stretching out his large, bony hand. "We 'll sail in the same ship if you 've no objection to make."

"I ask nothing better," answered the boy; "but before I leave, I have some business to attend to, at Cette, which may take some time."

"Never mind, I'm in no hurry; I can wait. When a man is going off for three or four years it may be, he can easily content himself to wait a few days. Nothing plagues me so much as to ship without a messmate. I am determined to go in your vessel. Is it a bargain?"

"If you please," replied Daniel.

"By the by," said the sailor, "are you acquainted in Cette?"

"I never left Roussillon."

"So much the better, I will pilot you about; for nobody knows that port better than I do. I've had more than one lark there between my voyages, and I've explored all the best places. So you say," he added, "that you have business in Cette."

"Yes, my father has given me a few commissions for old friends," answered the boy with some hesitation.

This hesitation did not escape the Argus eye of the sailor, and he went on in a careless tone: "Never mind, youngster, let every one mind his own business. I sha'n't pry into yours"; and, refilling his pipe, he puffed out fresh clouds of smoke.

It was with great reluctance that Daniel betrayed this distrust of his new friend. With the frankness natural to the southern character he longed to tell his adventure with

the castaway, and the mission with which he was charged; but he had resolved that he would be very prudent at the outset of his new career. Were not his simple trust and readiness to confide in Mateo the first causes of all his misfortunes? Accordingly, he was silent.

On the other hand, Dominic did not seem much offended by Daniel's reticence. He soon recovered his loquacity; and the story of his voyages, with his droll manner of telling it, rapidly distracted the boy's sad thoughts. The sailor proved an excellent companion: he knew the specialities of every town, and there was not a station at which he did not invite Daniel to taste some incomparable Vermouth, or other *liqueur*, made nowhere else. With a charming grace he yielded to the boy, when it came to paying, saying gayly, "You may pay the footing, as you 're a green hand."

This unceasing gayety, this constant fire of jokes, enchanted Daniel, and gave him a high opinion of his merry comrade. He accordingly reproached himself more than ever for his distrust of so good a fellow. He could not restrain himself long, and, forgetting his good resolves, said to Dominic: "I 'd like to ask your advice."

"What about, young one? Don't be shy."

"I am intrusted with a commission which troubles me greatly." And without a moment's thought he told his new friend, of the wreck of the Australian ship, the rescue and death of the poor miner. He had the delicacy, however, to pass over Bastien Moreau's confessions.

"Well, young one," said the sailor when the boy ended, "there is only one thing to be done: we must hunt up the Moreau family. You say that the dying man charged you to deliver the portfolio to his wife?"

"Yes; but he said that I might keep all the money in it."

"And how much money was there?" asked the sailor.

"About five hundred dollars."

"Five hundred dollars! Why, it is a small fortune."

"Yes; but my father advised me only to take the money which I needed for my journey and expenses to Cette, and to return the rest to Mrs. Moreau."

"Never mind," said Dominic. "Until we find her, we have a perfect right to live upon the money, and the good lady will be sure to give us the rest to pay for our trouble. I say, young one, now that we are so rich, we will put up at the 'Three Parrots'; it's the best hotel in the port, and we shall live like fighting cocks there."

The train now entered the station at Cette. Dominic rose, took his bundle, and Daniel followed him. Walking along the edge of the neighboring canal, the sailor plunged into the dark and narrow streets of the old town. Night drew on apace, and when the two companions came out on the wharves which ran along the South Dock, the street lamps were lighted, and the long rows of saloons and taverns were brightly illuminated. Dominic paused an instant to study the brilliant line, then, seeing a lantern bearing a

rudely painted picture of three bright-green birds, said: "Here is our hotel."

The "Three Parrots," the finest hotel in Cette, according to Dominic's statement, was a narrow, five-storied house, with but one window on a floor, the basement being filled up with a large window, full of bottles of various hues, lighted by a single gas-burner.

Daniel, preceded by Dominic, went into the office, which was crowded with sailors drinking and smoking, in the midst of an indescribable hurly-burly and noise. Making his way through the mob, the seaman reached the counter, behind which sat enthroned a large and majestic lady, and, making her a ceremonious bow, he said: "Mrs. Ginestous, let me present my friend Daniel Riva, a young man of the finest family, who is thinking of taking a voyage merely for pleasure, and whose family have put him under my care. The room on the first floor will do for us. But give us a good dinner, and be sure you send in your best wine."



"Daniel could not finish his sentence."

CHAPTER V.

A MISTAKE.

THE best room in the "Three Parrots," the "best hotel in Cette," only differed from the other rooms in that hospitable house in the luxury of its furnishing. It contained two beds with straw mattresses, while the others had a greater or less number of mattresses, without a sign of a bed. It boasted of two straw chairs, and a worn-out table, whose broken leg was only held on by an ingenious system of strings, and finally — height of luxury! — a chest of drawers. Never within the memory of man had this elegant article been put to any use by an occupant of the room, they being all poor sailors, who carried all they owned on their backs or done up in a handkerchief.

Dominic was not backward in praising this sumptuous apartment to his companion, when, after a good meal, plen-

tifully washed down by Mrs. Ginestous' famous wine, the two travellers took possession of their room on the first floor.

On this occasion Daniel slept more peacefully. The pleasant incidents of the day had in some measure effaced his sad memories, and he woke next day refreshed in body and mind. The sun, already high in the heavens, sent glittering rays dancing about the room, whose dirty, sordid air struck the boy more forcibly than on the previous night. He rose quickly and, opening the window, leaned out to gaze at the interesting sights and the busy life of the harbor beneath. He curiously scanned the fine ships, with their shining hulls and slender masts, elegantly rigged, crowded closely together in the great dock. Which of them would bear him out into the unknown, into the future, to his fortune? In imagination he was already off, speeding over the blue waters, and forgetful of his promise to Bastien Moreau. But it soon recurred to him. Before he enjoyed his liberty, he must fulfil that sacred trust.

Already impatient and eager to begin his search, Daniel turned away from the window. Dominic was assuredly a sluggard. The sun falling on his face only seemed to make his sleep more profound and his snores more loud and long.

"Dominic!" cried Daniel.

Not a movement.

The boy took one of the two chairs and threw it noisily to the floor. This delicate proceeding not only resulted in

the permanent separation of the back of the chair and its seat, but it also waked the obstinate sleeper with a start, and he sat up, muttering a few oaths; however, when he saw Daniel, he added more amiably: "Well, youngster, so you 're out of patience? I 'm coming, I 'm coming."

"I am eager to be off," said the boy.

"Then you 've made a bargain with the captain?" cried the sailor with a sneer. "You must be fond of hard work."

"Not at all," said Daniel, with some temper. "You know very well that I am anxious to get through with Bastien Moreau's business."

"Oh, that 's another matter. In that case, I am yours to command."

And, jumping out of bed, the sailor went into one corner of the room, took a pitcher of water, and, lifting it high above him, poured the contents over his head, forming a large pond on the floor. After sniffing violently and shaking his shock of red hair, like a spaniel coming out of the water, he took a towel and rubbed himself vigorously.

"That 's all right now," he said to Daniel. "There 's nothing like a pitcher of water to set your head straight, especially after such a good dinner as we had."

"And that pond on the floor?" asked the young man, somewhat astonished at this free and easy proceeding.

"Don't be alarmed, it 's the custom of the house; water always finds its level. Now let us visit our amiable host-

ess; she is the only person I know who can tell us where Mrs. Moreau lives"; and planting his fur cap on his dripping head, the sailor left the room.

Mrs. Ginestous received her guests with her sweetest smile. She was still enthroned behind her zinc-covered counter, and comparing the size of the lady with that of the space allotted to her, Daniel seriously wondered whether the poor woman were not a permanent fixture.

At Dominic's first words, Mrs. Ginestous made an effort to throw up her arms, which were far too short and fat for such an effort; then she cried in honied accents: "Do I know Mrs. Moreau? For the whole thirty years that I've been keeping the 'Three Parrots' —"

"The finest house in the port," politely interrupted Dominic.

"As you say," resumed the hostess. "Having lived at Cette for thirty years, how can you suppose that I don't know every inhabitant? Poor Mrs. Moreau —"

Daniel, fearing that the fat lady would tell his companion all the misfortunes endured by Bastien's widow, interrupted her hurriedly, saying: "Where does Mrs. Moreau live?"

"No. 20 Canal Street," coldly answered the hostess.

"Thank you, madam," replied the boy; "that information is all I wished"; and he quickly left the hotel, followed by Dominic, who whispered in his ear: —

"You have offended old Mother Ginestous. You were wrong; we may need her help at any time."

On reaching Canal Street the two friends stopped in front of No. 20, which proved to be a modest-looking shop. A large sign over the door bore these words in big letters: —

MOREAU.

GROCERIES. WEST INDIA GOODS.

Glass jars of all sizes, filled with candy, pots of preserves arranged in the window, open boxes displaying treasures of prunes, dried apples, and canned vegetables, with bunches of brushes, feather dusters, brooms and candles piled about the door, quite did away with the need of this sign.

With a beating heart, Daniel stepped into the shop, and found himself face to face with a boy in a blue apron, who came forward obsequiously, rubbing his hands and saying: "What will you have, sir?"

"I want to speak to Mrs. Moreau," said Daniel in a timid voice.

"There she is," replied the boy, pointing to a little, thin old woman, with a long nose and a pair of spectacles, who came from the back shop at this moment.

The youth advanced towards her and bowed respectfully. "Would you kindly allow me a few moment's conversation?"

"What have you to say to me?" sourly answered the

woman. "You can speak here; we shall not be interrupted."

"Still, madam," continued Daniel, "what I have to tell you is so serious that I do not know whether I can — "

"Trust me," interrupted Dominic, "you had better take us into your parlor. Such a piece of news — "

Daniel silenced him by a gesture.

Poor Mrs. Moreau, greatly surprised, and somewhat alarmed, scarcely knew what to do. Young Riva looked so modest, so honest, so serious; but on the other hand, his comrade's face was very suspicious. At last she rose, and pointing to the door of the back shop, she said: "Go in, gentlemen; I will follow you directly." And, turning to the boy, she added: "You'll keep a good watch, George, won't you?"

"Now, gentlemen, tell me to what I am indebted for the honor of your visit," she inquired, on finding herself alone with the two sailors.

"Dear me, madam," said Daniel, "my errand is such a painful one that I scarcely dare — "

"Go on, I entreat you," said the woman.

"Very well, then, madam, your husband died in my arms — "

Daniel could not finish his sentence. Mrs. Moreau fell fainting on a chair, crying, "Augustus!" In vain the two sailors tried to restore the poor creature to conscious-

ness, when hurried steps were heard in the shop; the door was thrown violently open, and admitted a large man, whose fat, kindly face was red with rage. He stopped, struck dumb by the sight of the two men, and exclaimed angrily: —

"What are you doing here?"

Before the sailors could recover from their surprise, Mrs. Moreau, roused from her faint by this familiar voice, rose and threw herself into the stout man's arms, crying, "Augustus! My husband!"

"Let us be off," whispered Dominic. "We've made a mistake. There'll be a row."

Daniel made endless excuses and apologies; but the grocer seemed most reluctant to accept them, and the shop-boy stood at the door, armed with a broom. The situation became alarming.

Dominic's firm attitude at last allayed the tempest. "You know, my friend," he explained, "you must not get mad. We made a mistake; it seems that your wife is not our Mrs. Moreau. Therefore, accept our excuses and let us go peaceably or I'll smash something in your shop."

This threat speedily calmed the angry grocer.

"Go," he said majestically, "go, infamous impostors, and never show your faces here again!"

"We have our own tradesmen," said Dominic with much dignity, as he beat a hasty retreat, preceded by Daniel.

"If you had n't been in such a hurry," said the sailor, "this would never have happened. Mrs. Ginestous was going to tell us the story of Mrs. Moreau, the grocer's wife; we should have soon seen that she was n't the person we wanted. Let us go back to the hotel; the good woman may be able to help us out of our trouble."

They had but a cold reception from their hostess; however, the story of their adventures soon calmed her wrath, and she began to laugh so heartily that the counter shook with the fat lady's mirth. When quiet was restored, thinking that Daniel had been punished enough, she gave him a most gracious smile, and offered him a glass of wine to set him up again, — an offer which Dominic eagerly accepted. While the sailors drank, the landlady considered.

"Your Mrs. Moreau is a widow, then?" she asked.

"Yes," said Daniel; "at least she has not been a widow long, for I was sent here to break the news of her husband's death to her; but she has lived alone with her daughter for the last six years, Mr. Moreau having gone to Australia."

"Then I can't tell you where to find her. I know of no Mrs. Moreau in Cette answering to your description. Ah! I have it now. Was n't the husband a government official?"

"Yes."

"A tall, fair-haired man, who turned out badly, and

went off owing everybody money, and leaving his wife and child to starve."

"Mr. Moreau did get into trouble," timidly answered the boy.

"That's the one. He robbed the naval department. Well, young sir, you must go to the naval department. They can undoubtedly tell you there what has become of his wife."

"That's a good idea," cried Dominic. "Let us go to the pay-office."

The two friends, now inseparable, went together to the naval pay-office, where, after waiting for two hours, they were sent from clerk to clerk and finally to the head book-keeper, a good-natured old man, to whom Daniel told the story of the castaway. He listened attentively, and when the young man finished, shook hands with him cordially and said: —

"You are a good fellow, and I am very glad that I can help you. Mrs. Moreau came here, not three months ago, to bring back the money which her unfortunate husband took from the department. I can, therefore, tell you exactly where she lives. She is not in Cette; she has gone with her daughter to a little house in the country belonging to her brother-in-law, Mr. Martin, in the village of Balaruc, about three miles out of town. She lives there very quietly, I hear, and you are sure to find her at home. The poor woman will be sorry to hear your sad news. She

loved her wretched husband in spite of all his faults. Bastien was an old friend of mine. He was more thoughtless than wicked; and on her last visit to me she told me how much she wished to go out and join him."

Daniel wrote down Mrs. Moreau's address and thanked the kind bookkeeper, who said, as he took leave of him: "Don't you want to be a sailor, my boy? If you ever need my help, come to me freely. Ask for Mr. Davis, the head bookkeeper."



"He plunged his hand into the drawer."

CHAPTER VI.

A FALSE FRIEND.

It was now late in the afternoon; so, in spite of Daniel's impatience, his companion persuaded him to postpone their trip to Balaruc until the next day. The sailor could not disguise his annoyance at the prospect that the boy would so soon fulfil his charge. "I should really like to know," he said, "why you are in such a hurry. The poor woman will be made very unhappy by your sad

news. Do leave her a few more days in peace. And then, think how well off we are at the Three Parrots. We shall have to come down to hard tack soon enough. Do let us profit by this opportunity. When you have returned what money remains, if this woman don't give us a good round sum for our pains, we shall have to set sail without further delay, for, for my own part, I have n't a cent in my pocket. Why should n't you keep the money? Did n't the miner give it to you outright?"

"To be sure," said the boy; "but I promised my father that I would only keep what was strictly necessary for my expenses, and would give the rest to Mrs. Moreau. I will not break my promise."

All resistance was vain, and Dominic apparently made up his mind to accept the situation cheerfully. To make the best of their remaining time, he took Daniel to see the principal sights of the city, though not without many pauses at the taverns by the way; then they returned to the Three Parrots, where a dinner, as delicious as the one of the day before, awaited them.

Next morning Daniel, with his inseparable friend, left the hotel bright and early, and, hiring a carriage from a neighboring stable by the landlady's advice, set out for the village home of Mrs. Moreau. Balaruc is the Saint Cloud of Cette; the charming cottages lie amidst lovely gardens on the shores of Lake Thau. The road leading to it winds

picturesquely along the lake, formerly an estuary of the Mediterranean, its brackish waters being only separated from the sea by a narrow strip of sand.

Two hours after they left Cette, our travellers came in sight of the outskirts of Balaruc. Daniel questioned a passer-by, who pointed out Mrs. Moreau's pretty cottage near the lake. The carriage stopped at a handsome iron gate. The young man jumped quickly out and seeing a chain hanging at the side, rang the bell attached to it violently. Dominic joined his comrade, and curiously examined the house through the fence, expressing the result of his examination by the words: "My eyes! I should n't mind living there myself, and I 'm sure the owners of such an establishment won't want to take *our* money from us."

As no one appeared in the garden, Daniel rang again. "Everybody must be in bed," said Dominic. "All the windows are shut. Rich people are never early risers. But look, young one! What do I see up yonder?" And he pointed to the top of the gate.

The youth raised his eyes, and saw a board inscribed in large letters: "House to let. Apply to Mrs. Fonblanc, house-agent, Bath Street."

"Impossible!" he cried. "There must be some mistake."

"Well," said the sailor, "let us go to Mrs. Fonblanc; she may be able to tell us."

The office was not far off, and the agent informed Dan-

iel that the house had indeed been occupied for some years by Mrs. Moreau, but that the lady went away a fortnight since with her daughter. Her brother-in-law, who owned the house, had sold it to a tradesman, who proposed to let it during the bathing season.

"Where does Mrs. Moreau live now?" asked Daniel.

"I don't know," said the agent. "However, before she went away, she asked me to send her letters to the Hôtel des Étrangers at Cette. I sent a letter to that address, about ten days ago, postmarked Melbourne, which must have gone astray, for it was covered with the stamps of the various offices through which it had passed."

Daniel paid no attention to the woman's last words. Getting hastily into the carriage, he cried to the driver: "Quick, to the Hôtel des Étrangers! A handsome gratuity, if you lose no time." The coachman, stimulated by this promise, whipped his horse, which broke into a gallop. The boy had forgotten Dominic, who was engaged in deliberately picking out the best cigars in the shop; but with a few quick strides, the active sailor caught up with the carriage, although he did not hide his displeasure from Daniel.

"If we should miss her again!" said the latter.

"Any one would think, to hear you talk," growled the sailor, "that these people were running away from us. Don't be alarmed, we shall find them soon enough, in all conscience."

The driver urged his horse to such a speed that an hour later the carriage drew up before the great doors of the Hôtel des Étrangers. In spite of his prejudices, Dominic was obliged to confess that it threw the Three Parrots completely into the shade. Servants dressed in handsome livery stood on the steps, ready to receive the travellers; but the sight of the two sailors descending from the carriage seemed to inspire them with the greatest scorn. Daniel, dismayed by this reception, did not know which way to turn, when he saw, standing in the doorway, a person dressed in black, with a white cravat, who seemed to be looking at him with disagreeable curiosity. Hat in hand the young man marched boldly up to this gentleman, and asked him if Mrs. Moreau was staying at the hotel.

"Mrs. Moreau?" said the man, tossing his sleek head. "Don't know."

"But I am sure that she came to this hotel," said Daniel.

"That may be. What do you want of her?"

"I have an important errand to her which cannot be delayed."

"My hotel is patronized by so many distinguished people," haughtily said the elegant gentleman, "that I cannot pretend to remember all their names; however," he added condescendingly, "as your business is important, I will look over the register."

He went into the office, followed by Daniel, and opening a huge leather-bound book, rapidly turned over the leaves.

"Mrs. Moreau, — I don't find the name. Stay! here it is. Mrs. Moreau and daughter and Mr. Martin."

"Those are the people," said Daniel.

"Arrived May 28, left June 14," continued the man.

"What! gone?" cried the youth.

"Party left yesterday."

"But where did they go?" inquired Daniel anxiously.

"That, my dear sir, is none of my business," said the man. "I am not in the habit of questioning my guests. Let every one mind his own business, I say. I see by the register that they left no address. Probably these ladies were not anxious to have their whereabouts known. That ought to satisfy you, I think."

Daniel could scarcely retain his tears. Leaving the office, he found Dominic at the door.

"Have they been ill treating you in there?" said the sailor, seeing the tears in his eyes. "I stayed outside, because I don't like to be shut up in such places; but if that fellow in the black coat gave you a licking, I'll knock him down for you."

"No, Dominic, that's not it. They are gone, and they only went yesterday, and no one knows what has become of them. When I think that I was so near them! How can I find them now? What shall I do?"

"Well, well," said the sailor kindly, "you need n't cry. We shall find them again — devil take them! Let us go back to the hotel; we can talk more freely there. All these lackeys stare at us with eyes as big as saucers, till I long to send them heels over head for having let your lady go before you saw her."

Returning to the hotel, the two friends argued long and hotly over the best means to find Mrs. Moreau. Refusing various impractical suggestions from Dominic, Daniel concluded to go and ask the advice of the friendly bookkeeper at the pay-office; but good Mr. Davis could only advise the boy to put an advertisement in the Parisian papers, in the hope that one of them might fall into the hands of some interested person or of some member of the family.

The same day Daniel inserted an advertisement in several papers, announcing to Mrs. Moreau that Mr. Riva, at the Three Parrots, would like her address, that he might send her a most important message.

A week passed and no news came. Dominic continued to lead a happy life, and Daniel saw the miner's money wasting rapidly away, to his no small alarm. "If we go on in this way," he said to the sailor one day, "we shall soon have spent every cent. I hear nothing of Mrs. Moreau, and I despair of ever finding her."

"All the more reason to make yourself easy. Did n't your father tell you that you might keep the money until you found the lady?"

"Certainly; but I cannot wait much longer. I have asked Mr. Davis to find me a berth, and I expect to sail very soon. If you like to come with me, I am sure that I can make some such arrangement. We have spent nearly two hundred dollars already; that is far too much, so I intend to send the rest to my father with the portfolio. It will be safe in his hands, and my mind will be at rest."

"Oh, come now, youngster," said Dominic eagerly, "you would n't do that! We may not be able to ship for some time. What can we do without money in the mean time?"

"We can do — don't be offended — exactly what you would have done if you had never met me," was the simple reply. "We must try to find a ship at once."

Dominic muttered a few words between his teeth about the stupidity and obstinacy of some people; but he made no more objections, and, stuffing his old cap on his head, he went out hastily. He did not come back for dinner. Daniel waited in vain, thinking that his resolution had doubtless offended his friend, which he regretted, for he began to be warmly attached to his queer companion, whose looks affected him but little.

Left alone in his room, the boy took out the portfolio and began to count the money which it contained. There was but one gold piece and three one hundred-dollar bills, which he spread out on the table. He could not remember ever having so much money in his possession before,

and he sighed when he thought that if it had not been for his father's scruples this money would have been his own. But his father's wishes were law to him. He never dreamed of disobeying them.

The portfolio lay open upon the table, and his eyes fell mechanically upon the fastening of the secret drawer.

"Why," thought Daniel, "did the miner forbid me to open that drawer, when he said himself that there was nothing valuable in it? Perhaps he was afraid that if I did not find his widow I might throw away things that were insignificant to me."

He took up the portfolio; his fingers were on the drawer.

"There certainly are no jewels there," he said, "I should feel them through the leather. It feels like a photograph. Who knows? Perhaps it 's a picture of Bastien's wife or daughter. It cannot be his own. He would never have been so careful of it. But if it is Mrs. Moreau's picture, I had better take it into my own keeping. It might help me to recognize her, if I should ever come across her."

His finger pressed the spring; still he hesitated.

"I promised a dying man that I would never open this drawer," said he; "it is almost as sacred as an oath. Yes; but Bastien was sure that I should find his wife and child at Cette. If I look at this photograph, it is only to help me in my search. That would not be breaking my promise."

This subtle reasoning seemed to ease his conscience. He opened the drawer, and took out a small package of papers tied up with red ribbon. The first thing that met his eyes when he opened the package was, as he had guessed, a photograph, the portrait of a young woman. Daniel turned the card, and saw on the back these words: "Margaret Moreau, Jan. 1, 1857": that was the date of Bastien's flight. Mrs. Moreau could not have changed so much in six years that he could not recognize her, and he therefore studied the picture long and carefully to impress it on his memory.

Under this picture was another, the photograph of a little girl of four or five years old; then a child's curl, a dried rose, and lastly some letters. Daniel glanced carelessly at these tokens of affection; he was about to restore them to their hiding-place, retaining Mrs. Moreau's picture, when he perceived that the drawer was not empty. He took out a little note-book, which he instantly found to be a sort of journal.

The boy's curiosity was aroused; his conscience, on the contrary, was lulled to sleep: he sat down, and read, page by page, the brief recital of Bastien's adventures. It was the same story which the miner had told Daniel, with a few added details.

Day by day the note-book showed how Bastien gradually yielded to the weight of his misfortunes. Ill luck seemed to pursue him like a fate from the time that he

landed in Australia. At last he resolved to abandon the useless contest.

"All is over!" said the note-book. "After working for a month and a half, we discover that we are on the wrong track, and that the creek which seemed so likely has not one trace of gold. My companions have gone. I refused to go with them. I will die here, on the very spot where Fortune seemed to smile on me for the first time. I have spent the whole day in wandering about the shaft; it shall serve as my tomb. These lines are the last that I shall write. Will those who may find this journal kindly send it to my wife, whose address is on the first page?"

"Poor man," said Daniel, "how he suffered! and after all he perished in the Gulf of Cerberus!"

He turned the page and read: "Saved! Saved! Thank God! Gold! Gold! Last night I went down into the shaft. I loaded my revolver, but before I died I wished to address a last farewell to you, my beloved wife. I knelt and prayed. My courage failed me when I thought of you, and of my daughter, whom I so longed to see once more; and yet there was nothing left for me but death. I rose slowly. As I leaned against the wall, I loosened a large stone, which brought several others with it in its fall. I thought that I should be buried beneath the ruins, which would have been too slow and painful a death. My revolver fell from my hand and disappeared in the rubbish. I must have it at any cost, and, as it was now pitch-dark,

I struck a light with my flint and steel. Imagine my joy, my rapture, my ecstacy, when, holding the light close to the ground, I discovered that my feet were literally buried in nuggets of gold. The long-sought metal was found, it surrounded me on every hand. I threw myself upon the precious rocks. I kissed them, I wept, I was fairly mad. I could not sleep. When the sun rose I left the shaft. I gazed eagerly about, hardly daring to believe my senses. I trembled lest one of my comrades should return and dispute the treasure with me. I want it all, — all for you."

Daniel felt his heart throb wildly as he read this marvellous tale. Further on, the miner added: "I have worked three days, and I carry away with me all the gold which I can drag. But before leaving, I carefully concealed the mouth of the pit, that no one may suspect its existence. This was a most difficult task. I noted down its situation, and have made a plan of the place, that I may be able to return to it; for I want every particle of the treasure which the creek contains. This plan shall never leave my hands. I dare not trust it to this note-book, for fear — "

On reaching this point, Daniel heard his comrade's heavy and uncertain step on the stairs. Ashamed to be caught in the very act of committing such a breach of trust, the boy hurriedly gathered up the papers and stuffed them into their hiding-place, pressing down the lid. In his



"At this moment Dominic entered." — Page 81.

haste he dropped a scrap of paper out of the note-book, and it fell under the table. At this moment Dominic entered.

"Well, youngster," he cried in a hoarse voice, "I hope you'll be pleased. I've found a captain who may take us both. But what are you doing there, counting your money?"

"Yes," said the boy, "I wanted to see how much I had left to send to my father to-morrow." And as he spoke, he put the bank-bills back into the portfolio, and, as he did every night, he dropped it into the bureau-drawer.

"All right, we sha'n't want any more money," added the sailor, "as we're going to sail so soon. Good-night, young one. I'm going to bed, for I've been running about the harbor all day, and I'm fairly worn out."

He threw himself upon his bed, dressed as he was, merely drawing off his boots. Daniel undressed, put out the candle, and soon fell asleep, thinking of Australia and its rivers of gold.

The sailor also seemed to be somewhat disturbed. Once he called Daniel in an undertone. Getting no answer, he arose quietly, drew a knife from his pocket, opened it, and advanced cautiously towards the chest of drawers. As he opened the drawer it gave a loud crack. The man paused in alarm.

"If the brat stirs, I'll put an end to him," he muttered.

Daniel slept peacefully. His treacherous companion plunged his hand into the half-open drawer, swiftly withdrew the portfolio, which he hid in his bosom; then putting on his cap, he took his boots under his arm and silently left the room.



"Daniel raised his head."

CHAPTER VII.

BASTIEN MOREAU'S SECRET.

When Daniel waked next morning, he was greatly surprised to find that Dominic was already up and had left the room. Still his absence did not create any suspicions, and he opened the window and sat down to look out over the harbor while he waited for his friend's return.

But the boy's mind, filled with the strange story of the gold-digger, was far away from Cette. It was beyond the sea, in the fabulous land of Australia. So there really were countries where one might become rich at a single stroke, where one had only to dig a pit to see a stream of gold come pouring into it. Why should not he, too, go there and seek his fortune? True, Bastien had to struggle

long and hard with want and misery, but then what success had crowned his efforts! Daniel was young, he had plenty of time before him. What were a few years more or less, if he might return to Castel some day with millions?

If he only knew exactly where the miner found his treasure. The entries in the note-book told him that Bastien Moreau had left Melbourne and travelled far into the interior until he reached a great river running through a desert. But what river was it? The miner's directions were vague and anything but precise.

Perhaps he had not read them with sufficient care, and then the sailor had interrupted him suddenly. The portfolio was still there; nothing was easier than to resume his reading.

He left the window and went to the bureau. The drawer was half open. As he was about to put in his hand he paused, struck with remorse. To re-read the manuscript, he must open the secret compartment again; again break the promise he had given. Yesterday he had had a good excuse: he wanted to see the widow's picture, to aid him in his search. To-day his indiscretion was entirely selfish. No, decidedly he would respect Bastien's secret. He turned away from the tempting piece of furniture.

But he came back to it. His too easy conscience was as ready with excuses as on the previous day, and with a hes-

itating hand, he opened the drawer. The portfolio was not there.

After an instant's surprise he thought that he must be mistaken. He drew out one drawer after another; all were empty. Perhaps the portfolio had slipped down behind one of the drawers. He anxiously looked, but in vain.

For a moment he stood rooted to the spot. Then, seized by a mad hope, he again searched the chest of drawers, turned his pockets inside out, felt the lining of his clothes. Nothing!

A suspicion then darted across his brain.

"Dominic has taken the portfolio!" he cried.

With three bounds he reached the door, descended the narrow staircase, and stood before Mrs. Ginestous, still sitting motionless behind her counter..

"Where is Dominic?" he asked in a choked voice.

"You know as well as I do," calmly replied the landlady. "Mr. Martigues sailed last night; he came down after bidding you good-by, and generously paid your bill. His ship weighed anchor this very morning. He said to me, as he left: 'Mrs. Ginestous, I intrust the youngster to you, he won't sail for several days. I'm sorry to have to leave him alone, but duty calls and I know that you'll treat him like your own child.' Dear Mr. Dominic, he is so good! just fancy —"

"So Dominic has gone!" interrupted the boy. "You are quite sure?"

"Perfectly sure," said the stout lady. "The pilot who took his ship out of the harbor has just been in for a glass of brandy. Come, my boy, you must n't be so down in the mouth. Mr. Martigues will be back again one of these days, and you will meet him again."

"I hope so," muttered the youth, who had listened to the landlady's words with a pale face and quivering lips.

At one moment he was about to accuse Dominic, to expose his conduct; but what would be the use? The sailor had none but friends in the house. He could only make an unavailing scandal. He therefore contented himself with thanking Mrs. Ginestous, and, with a bursting heart and despondent mien, went back to his room.

There, once alone, he sat down by the table and, burying his face in his hands, burst into tears. With his characteristic variableness, he bitterly reproached himself for his conduct since leaving Castel, for his absurd confidence in an utter stranger, for the extravagances which he had committed, and above all for the wicked indiscretion which had led him to break his promise. How could he tell his father of the loss of the portfolio? How confess to him his fresh faults? What was he to do without money? If he could not manage to ship on some vessel at once, he would be reduced to beg.

All at once, amidst his tears, he saw a shining object on the table. It was the twenty-dollar gold-piece which he had taken out the night before and which he had left there

in his haste to hide the contents of the portfolio from the sailor. This discovery consoled him somewhat. Thanks to this scanty sum, carefully hoarded, he might wait for a good opportunity to sail. He put the coin into his pocket and rose, more composed, and decided to ask good Mr. Davis's advice.

His hat was lying on the floor, where he threw it the previous night, before going to bed. As he stooped to pick it up, he saw close beside it a scrap of paper, torn and yellow, but carefully folded together. He mechanically took it up and unfolded it. The paper contained a few lines, written in a cramped, delicate chirography, in which he recognized at a glance the hand of Bastien Moreau. He read: —

"Starting from the point where the Murrumbidgee joins the Murray, follow the right bank of the river for about six hundred paces down to a narrow rocky ravine, the mouth of which is shaded by a few gum-trees; then, turning your back on the river, go to the north and follow the course of the ravine; after walking two hours you will come to an enormous stone standing alone, which marks — "

The sentence was here interrupted by a rent which had carried off the lower corner of the paper. In the opposite corner, these words were still visible: "which runs down twenty-eight feet"; and below were a few lines, marked with figures, joining together round marks, probably the remnant of a plan.

Daniel read these mysterious words several times over. There was no doubt of it. This was the plan which the miner mentioned in his journal, and which he always carried about him.

"Why," thought the boy, "is this plan torn? Perhaps it is because Bastien, having exhausted the mine, had no further need of it. But then why should he have kept this fragment? And what can the Murray be? and the Murrumbidgee? I will know one of these days," he said to himself; "at any rate I have the mysterious plan, and as Mrs. Moreau is not here to profit by it, it is only fair that I should make use of it. This plan was evidently intended for me; a providential chance saved it from Dominic's hands and placed it in mine."

He carefully folded the paper, put it in his waistcoat pocket, and seizing his hat, rushed out.

As he hurried towards the pay-office, he muttered: "On leaving the point where the Murrumbidgee joins the Murray — six hundred paces. I shall never forget it."

Mr. Davis was not in his office. Daniel waited for him with ardent impatience, and as soon as he caught sight of the good bookkeeper, ran to meet him, crying: —

"Good morning, Mr. Davis. I am off for Australia."

"Good morning, my lad," was the quiet reply. "Then you've found a vessel?"

"No, sir, but I want to go to Australia."

"Very well, come into my office, and we'll look over the

list of ships advertised to sail. We may find something that will suit you."

Daniel followed Mr. Davis, who, less impatient than he, made his arrangements for the day most leisurely. He hung his hat and overcoat on a peg, slowly drew on his black alpaca over-sleeves, and sat down in his great arm-chair. Then he pulled towards him a register bound in green, with a red square on the back, inscribed in gilt letters with the words: "Shipping List, 1873." But, just as he was about to open it, he changed his mind, took from his waistcoat pocket a small tortoise-shell snuff-box, and proceeded with all precaution to take a solemn pinch of snuff.

Daniel's southern blood boiled. At last the book keeper put a respectable-looking pair of spectacles on his nose and opened the book.

"We said Australia," he said quietly. "Let me see, let me see," and his finger ran down the list of ships. "Here is the Juno, Captain Marquand, loaded for Grahamstown. That is at the Cape, — not what you want. The Bertha Alice, for Montevideo. The St. James — Are you absolutely bent on going to the antipodes?"

"If I possibly can, sir," said Daniel timidly.

"Because, if not, here is the White Cross, loaded for Rio Janeiro. The captain is a friend of mine, and I could recommend you to him."

"I should prefer Australia."

"You are determined, it seems. But what are you

going to do there? It is not such an attractive country."

"I hardly know what my reason is, myself," stammered the young man; "but I want to ship for one of the Australian ports, Sydney or Melbourne."

"Well, in that case, my lad, you won't ship from Cette," replied the obliging bookkeeper. "I have looked through the whole list of ships, those that are loading as well as those that are sailing, and I don't see a single one that is going to the land of your dreams."

"That 's a great pity, sir; but what would you advise me to do, then?"

"Engage on the White Cross. You will see Brazil, which is quite as good as Australia, and before you 've earned an officer's berth, you will be sure to find an opportunity to go to Melbourne. I will give you a line to the captain; he may need a cabin boy. As for wages, you know cabin boys are always wanted on board ship."

"I thank you," said Daniel, "but I should like to think the matter over before I decide."

The boy had not foreseen this disappointment, and was about to leave the office, quite crestfallen.

"Well, my lad, so the bank is closed. Any one might know that by one look at your mug."

At these words, uttered in a cheerful tone, Daniel raised his head, and saw before him a man of gigantic stature, whose red face, framed in a short, tawny beard, and lighted

up by small, sharp eyes, wore a most attractive air of jollity. A gold-laced cap, with a deep visor, and a blue cloth pilot-jacket showed him to be the captain of a merchantman. The giant, enchanted with his own joke, was seized with a loud fit of laughter which shook his whole huge person.

Daniel stood abashed, hat in hand, before this strange creature.

"I suppose that the locker is empty," he continued, "and you 've been asking for an advance, but it 's a hard squeeze."

"No, captain," said the young man, "that 's not it. I 've been asking Mr. Davis for a berth."

"Ah!" said the captain, growing serious, "you want to ship?"

"Yes, captain, as cabin boy."

"I thought so. How old are you?"

"Fifteen."

"And you have not found a ship?"

"No, captain. At least, I did not find one because I only want to go to Australia."

"Ah! indeed!" said the captain. "And what is your name?"

"Daniel Riva, from Castel, in the Lower Pyrenees."

"Have you ever been on a voyage?"

"No, captain, but I know the sea. My father is a pilot, and I have been out with him."

"You look to me like a strong, hearty boy," continued

the captain. "You are just what I want. Hark ye, I sail to-morrow and I need a cabin boy. I go from here to the coast of Africa, but there I shall load for Australia. Will that suit you?"

"Oh yes!" was Daniel's joyful answer.

"Well, your fist on it, my lad."

And the captain completely swallowed the boy's slender hand in his enormous red fist. Then, searching in his waistcoat pocket, he drew out an eagle, which he gave the boy. "There," said he, "there are ten dollars earnest money. I depend upon you. To-morrow, at ten o'clock, be on board. You won't forget: the Jackson, American ship, Captain Green, bound for Mogador."

"Never fear, captain, I shall be punctual."



"She was a fine brig."

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN GREEN.

DANIEL was true to his appointment with Captain Green. At early dawn he left the hospitable roof of Mrs. Ginestous, and with his little bundle of clothes under his arm went gayly towards the harbor.

It was a splendid morning. The sun shone on the many-colored shipping, and a light breeze fluttered the canvas and flags of the forest of masts which filled the great dock.

A custom-house officer pointed out the Jackson, which had left the dock, ready to sail, and swung gently alongside the jetty which defends the mouth of the harbor. She was a fine brig, of five or six hundred tons, with a well-shaped black hull and graceful mainmast. The stars and stripes of the United States floated at the stern and the white sails hung half furled at the yard-arms.

Daniel, like a true sailor's son, examined the vessel closely; then, satisfied with his scrutiny, he hailed a waterman in the harbor, who put him on board the Jackson with a few strokes of the oars.

The cabin boy, clinging to the companion-way hanging from the starboard port, raised himself nimbly to the deck, where he had no sooner set foot than he found himself face to face with Captain Green, who cried pleasantly, "Oh! there you are, youngster. It is not ten o'clock yet. I see that you are true to your word. I want to take advantage of this fine breeze. We shall be off directly. Make haste and stow your kit and get to work."

"I am ready, captain."

"That's right. Some one will give you your number in the mess. By the way, do you speak English? No, of course not. Where should you have learned it? But you'll soon get used to it; my men have to speak all languages. As all the orders are given in English, you shall have a mate who will interpret them to you." And, turning to the poop, the captain cried in stentorian tones: "Hollo, hollo there! Penguin!"



"You see this boy?" said the captain, pointing to Daniel. 'This is the new cabin boy I told you about." — Page 97.

At this summons, a cabin boy came running up in working dress, that is, barefooted and simply dressed in a blue shirt and trousers of the same color. He was about the same age as Daniel, but more delicate and slender. His great blue eyes and golden curls gave him an almost girlish look.

"You see this boy?" said the captain, pointing to Daniel. "This is the new cabin boy I told you about. Take him into the forecastle and let him hang his hammock next to yours. You are to teach him his work. If he don't do well, you will get the cat-o'-nine-tails. You may go."

Daniel followed his new friend, who led him forward into the tiny stateroom between decks, which they were to share in common. While he made a hasty disposal of his clothes, he questioned Penguin, who answered him most amiably.

"The captain is a good fellow and very kind," he said, "but you must beware how you put the mate out, for, though he don't mean to be rough, he has a quick hand and a hard. But you heard what the captain said. For some days to come I shall take all your lickings; afterwards, when you have had time to learn the ropes, I can tell you that you 'll have to take your turn."

"I 'm afraid that I never can learn English," said Daniel somewhat uneasily.

"I 'll help you," said Penguin; "besides, the captain

and the mate speak French as well as you do; they are Louisiana creoles."

"And you?" asked the novice.

"Oh, I am from Quebec. I am a Canadian."

"Then where did you learn to speak French so well?"

"Oh, that 's just the way," said the boy, laughing, "all you foreign people look upon us as utter savages. But they speak French in Canada," he added, with some pride, "and every good Canadian is as thorough a Frenchman as you are."

A shrill whistle interrupted the conversation at this point.

"Tumble up on deck!" cried Penguin. "That 's the mate's whistle."

As the boys scrambled up the stairs, they saw above them the withered, bilious face of the mate, who was more of a mulatto than a creole, and who shouted angrily: "What are you doing down below, you rascal? Here I have been whistling for you an hour."

"Excuse me, sir, the captain ordered me to show the new cabin boy the ropes." And Penguin pulled his companion forward.

The mate eyed him from head to foot, and then said abruptly: "Your name?"

"Riva, sir."

"Very well, Riva, climb up to the top, and help the sailors to unfurl the brigantine."

Without a word, the new cabin boy sprang into the shrouds and was soon at his post.

The Jackson now made ready to leave port. Part of the crew hauled in the tow-line, while the rest stood in the rigging, ready to spread the sails to the wind. A small tug towed the vessel beyond the pier, where it left her. Then, at a signal from the captain, the masts were covered with canvas, and the Jackson, with a graceful courtesy, glided through the waves. To profit by the nor'-nor'-wester, which blew favorably, the studding sails were spread, and the coast-line faded fast in the dim distance.

Astride a boom, Daniel, hanging between sea and sky, waved a cheerful farewell to the shores of France. The fresh air, the excitement of working the ship, and the charm of novelty, made him forget his cares. At last he was off. Such was his inmost thought. It seemed to him that he was leaving all his troubles behind him on shore, and that thenceforth life would flow gently, without a storm, beneath a cloudless sky.

However, towards evening the ship momentarily approached the French coast, and Daniel's heart throbbed with emotion as he recognized the stern outlines of Cape Cerberus from afar. The setting sun purpled the peaks of the Pyrenees, fishing-boats were returning home, and the sight recalled to him the beautiful evening which proved the prelude to all his misfortunes. He thought of his father, who perhaps was there, close at hand, in one of those very boats;

thought of his good mother watching at home, silently weeping for her lost son. He then remembered that he had never written to them since he left home; the thought sent a hot blush to his cheeks, and tears filled his eyes. Instantly, carried away by a burst of repentance, he sprang upon the rail and threw a loving kiss in the direction of home, exclaiming: "I love you, and I swear that I will be an honest man."

Although the Jackson was a very small ship, her crew was uncommonly large. Ten or twelve men could easily work a brig of five or six hundred tons, while this one had sixty stout sailors, not counting the officers and two cabin boys. Daniel was much astonished to find so large a number of hands, and questioned his comrade on the subject, but he merely replied with a grin: "The captain likes to have plenty of men about him."

He might with equal truth have said that the captain had striven to collect a specimen of every race on earth for his ship. Certainly, the builders of the Tower of Babel could scarcely have offered a stranger assembly than the crew of the Jackson. The captain and mate, who although half French, belonged to the United States, and the cook, an old Virginia negro, considered themselves American citizens, while the sailors were of every nationality. English prevailed, but there were also Swedes, Spaniards, Italians, French, and Dutch, the ship's carpenter even representing the Parisian element. In a walk from one end of the deck

to the other, one might hear a medley of every conceivable language; not even Chinese was wanting, for Tchinyan, the captain's servant, found frequent occasion to introduce the dialect of the Celestial Empire. Yet we must say that, different as were their dialects, these men had a strange likeness each to the other. Southerners or Northerners were equally rough and ready; their features were alike marked by great determination. They were plainly sailors to the finger-ends, long accustomed to hardship and struggle in every sea and in every climate. In a word, it was a picked crew.

As the ordinary working of so small a vessel did not require many men, the majority spent their time in playing cards or in sleeping on deck. Strict discipline, nevertheless, reigned on board. Twice a day the captain reviewed the crew, as is done on men-of-war. Captain Green, with all his appearance of unruffled jollity, was not the man to excuse the least breach of orders, and Daniel soon noticed that all the sailors seemed to feel a mixture of enthusiastic admiration and profound fear for this singular being.

"Why did the captain ship so many hands?" he often wondered. "Does it really take sixty men to carry a few bales of silk and cases of liquor to Mogador, or are we going to so dangerous a country that every ship requires a regiment for its defence?"

These thoughts occasionally disturbed him; but he was so happy on board and the captain was so kind, that, turning

away from such ideas, he was content to enjoy the delights of sailing over a calm blue sea. However, a mysterious occurrence soon reawakened his suspicions.

Six days after they sailed from Cette, favored by exceptional weather, the Jackson entered the Straits of Gibraltar under crowded sail. Before long the huge rock upon which the English have planted their fortress, the true key to the Mediterranean, loomed up in the west.

The captain paced the poop-deck, followed by Daniel, who carried the glass with which the officer constantly scanned the Spanish coast. All at once Captain Green snatched it roughly from the boy's hands, directed it towards Gibraltar, then, turning towards the deck, which was covered with sailors, he shouted: "All hands below!"

At these words, which Daniel did not understand, there was a perfect tumult on deck. The men rose hurriedly and fled to the forecastle as if panic-stricken, with the exception of ten sailors, who, when the last refugee had vanished, quickly and carefully closed the hatch, and the better to conceal the opening, covered it with a large tarpaulin. That done, the crew, thus diminished, scattered over the deck and in the rigging, as if nothing out of the common had happened.

The cabin boy, surprised at this unwonted activity, stood glass in hand, by the captain, who said with a smile: "Don't be alarmed, youngster; only whatever happens, keep close to me, and not a word."

During the brief space required for the transformation of the Jackson, a steamer left the harbor, and ran directly across the bows of the brig, which was soon within hail. The steamer hoisted the English flag, with the signal, "Lay to."

Captain Green gave the order: "Hoist the colors!" and to the man at the helm: "Straight ahead!" As the brig continued on her road, the man-of-war fired a blank cartridge.

"This time the invitation is urgent," muttered the Louisianian, "we can't get by without a dose"; and turning to the pilot he shouted: "Hard a-starboard!" then to the quartermaster, "Take in the brigantine!" The orders were rapidly obeyed. The ship came about, and the sails flapped heavily against the masts.

Instantly a boat was put off from the man-of-war and approached the Jackson. A ladder was let down, and two officers of the British navy came on board. The captain received them politely at the port gangway. After an exchange of salutes, one of the officers said: "Excuse me, captain, but we are acting in accordance with orders sent us from the admiralty. Be good enough to show us your charter party."

"Here are my charter party and my bills of lading," replied Captain Green, handing the officer a bundle of papers, which he examined carefully, and then said: —

"You are bound for Mogador?"

"Yes, sir, with a half cargo of liquors and stuffs."

"How many men on board?"

"Ten, besides my two officers and the cabin boys."

With a rapid glance around him, the officer assured himself that the number stated by the captain was correct. He then re-read the ship's papers and said: "You are chartered by a French firm?"

"The firm of Pratt and Co., of Cette."

"Well, captain, before I leave you, I must warn you that your errand is a most dangerous one, and that if you don't want to lose your ship, you had better discharge your goods or change your colors at Gibraltar."

"I have no objection to change my colors," said Captain Green, with a laugh, "but I am in haste and can't wait. Besides, what danger can I meet with between here and Mogador?"

"The Atlanta, a privateer belonging to the Southern Confederacy, has been hovering about these parts for several weeks. A mail-packet, which arrived here from Gibraltar to-day, reports meeting her off the Canaries. Now perhaps you do not know that this pirate vessel haunts this much-frequented route to seize all ships flying the Northern flag as you do, and that after stripping she burns them."

"The devil!" said the captain, scratching his nose, with a puzzled look, "that's serious; but," he went on, with a proud toss of the head, "my ship is a fast sailer. It will

have to be a very smart fellow that catches her. I will proceed all the same, with your permission."

"So be it. You are warned. Our errand is done."

The two English officers saluted him and left the ship. As their boat put off, the captain leaned over the bulwarks and shouted after them: —

"Would you be so kind, gentlemen, as to give me the exact point at which the Atlanta was last seen?"

"To the south of Fortaventura Isle."

"A thousand thanks!" replied the captain, and apparently very much pleased with the information, he put the glass into its case, with a smart shove, and, turning to the mate, said: "Order the helmsman to resume his course."

The crew did not venture up from the forecastle for a breath of fresh air and to continue their lazy habits, until the vessel, leaving the straits, had doubled Cape Spartel and taken a southerly course.

Even then the captain ordered the officers to keep a strict lookout; he himself studied the horizon unceasingly all day, but no suspicious sail was signalled. The wind was favorable, the sea was calm.

Then how did it happen that so experienced a sailor as Captain Green, the commander of an American vessel so well known at New Orleans, made such a stupid mistake? Was he blinded by fears of meeting the terrible Atlanta? Was he deceived in his chart by an apparent similarity of

names? However that may be, the fact was that the Jackson sailed by Mogador without noticing it, skirted the African coast for several days, and, instead of entering a friendly port, anchored one evening below Cape Bojador, in a lonely bay, shut in by the shifting plains of Sahara.



"The captain anxiously swept the horizon."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SIGNAL ON CAPE BOJADOR.

If Daniel was surprised to see the Jackson anchor off a desert coast, his surprise became amazement next morning when he heard the captain say that the vessel had reached her journey's end. However, the crew seemed perfectly satisfied. Boats were launched, stocked with provisions, and the men went off, leaving only a handful of sailors to guard the ship. Daniel accompanied Captain Green, who had taken him into his personal service.

The boats crossed the shallow bay and landed on a hard sand beach, beyond which lay a line of low hills. Cape Bojador, forming one horn of the crescent, stood boldly out to sea and reared its bald, barren head some twenty yards above the hills.

It is difficult to imagine a spot more desolate, deserted, and forlorn than this part of the African coast, where the vast ocean bathes with its blue waves the yellowish billows of the vast, sandy sea of Sahara, in a vain attempt to impart a little of their own superabundant vitality. On the very shores of the bay, on the flanks of the sand-hills, grow thick tufts of alfa, — a precious growth, but of an evil mien with its long, silver-gray needles. Directly beyond the shore-line, all vegetation ceases. As far as the eye can see to the eastward, there is nothing but sand; no house, no human being is visible.

No sooner had the men landed than they set to work. While some, climbing the steep sides of Cape Bojador, quickly pitched a couple of tents, the other and larger portion scattered over the sand-hills, where, armed with their sheath-knives, they vigorously attacked the alfa grass. Binding it into sheaves, they heaped them at the extreme point of the cape, and the captain lighted this impromptu bonfire with his own hand. In a few seconds the crackling flames rose upwards and a thick column of smoke burst forth, the white plume reaching a tremendous height, as there was not the slightest air stirring.

While the sailors, working under the mate's orders, cut down more grass to keep up the fire, the captain anxiously swept the horizon with his glass.

What could all this mean? Why was this fire kindled on this desert shore? If they were trying to escape

Confederate cruisers, was there no danger that this signal would be seen by them? Daniel knew not what to think; his face betrayed his surprise so plainly that the captain could not help smiling.

"I fear we shall have to wait some time longer," he muttered as he shut up his telescope; and turning to Daniel, he added: "Hark ye, my boy, it is high time that you knew why we are here. Much as I wished to do so, it was impossible for me to say a word to you at Cette or even during the voyage. I could not risk injuring our noble cause by a possible indiscretion on your part. I took you on board partly because I needed you, but also because I saw by your face that you were a bold lad who would not object to a few strange adventures. Was I right?"

"I don't think, captain, that I ever showed myself a coward, and I should n't be a sailor's son if I did not love a roving life. But —"

"Yes, I know what you would say," rejoined the captain; "you want to hear a few more particulars. All in due time. To come to the point: you have probably heard of the war which has been raging in North America for two years past?"

"In a vague way, captain. But I remember that my father sometimes told me what he read in the papers about the matter."

"Well," continued Captain Green, "the Northern por-

tion of the United States wanted to abolish slavery at a stroke. This was a very wise idea, and I, for my own part, should not oppose its execution to a reasonable degree; but if carried out all at once, it would ruin the Southern States, whose rich and fertile soil could only be cultivated by negroes. Louisiana, my own State, Georgia, Florida, Virginia, in a word, the whole South, rebelled against the arbitrary action of the Yankees. The latter then excited our slaves against us; our homes, our fields, were pillaged and burned; our wives and children murdered. We were forced to take up arms to defend our honor, our independence, and our lives. Unable to crush us on the field of battle, the perfidious Yankees resolved to destroy our commerce; they blockaded our ports, and stopped all our ships. Then our brave president called to mind the valorous deeds of France when blockaded by the English and Spanish. He remembered that her corsairs, Jean Bart, Surcouf, and many, many others, served their country well. He appealed to every man of generous heart, and launched bold rovers upon every sea, who, pursuing the Northern merchantmen, wounded the avaricious Yankees in their most tender point. I solicited and obtained the honor of serving my country in this way. Leaving Richmond amid a thousand dangers, I crossed the blockade, and bought a fine, swift steamer in England. I armed and equipped her, and was about to start out; but the English police were watching me, and I was arrested

with some of my crew just as I was sailing. Luckily, my ship, in charge of a faithful officer, furnished with instructions from me, contrived to get away from England. At last, after many petty annoyances, I was set free. Followed by my men, I managed to reach France. At Cette, I bought this little brig without rousing suspicion, and came here, to this desolate corner of Sahara, where my ship will soon join us."

"Then, captain," interrupted Daniel, "the Jackson —"

"The Jackson goes no farther. My ship is that Atlanta of which you have already heard, for it seems that my mate, Mr. Evans, has not been wasting his time. I shall reward him well. So, my boy, know that your master is captain, and you are cabin boy, of the Atlanta, whether you will or no. Come, is n't it better to be on board a good man-of-war than to play the part of scullion on a trading vessel?"

"It is rather late in the day to ask me now," was the frank reply; "but —"

"No buts," said Captain Green sharply; "if you 're not satisfied, I 'll put you on shore at the first port, that 's all."

"That is not what I was going to say, Captain. I am happy to serve under your orders, for you have always been kind to me; but you promised to take me to Australia."

"Ah! so that 's where the shoe pinches," said the captain, with a laugh. "Well, we will go to Australia, I prom-

ise you. As soon as we have swept the Atlantic clean, we will take a look at the Indian Ocean to see if there is n't some Yankee bark lurking there for us to scuttle. And now, let 's try if the Atlanta is n't in sight. Not that I blame Mr. Evans for the delay, for you can understand that I could not make an appointment to the minute."

An hour later Daniel had made up his mind to accept what he had at first called kidnapping. He was now as impatient as the rest of the crew for the arrival of the famous Atlanta.

All day long the bonfire, fed by the sailors, threw up its cloud of smoke, which changed at nightfall to a pillar of burning flame. Placed thus upon an eminence, the brilliant signal must have been visible across the Sahara as well as far out at sea. So, if it escaped the lookout on the Atlanta, it might attract the attention of the wandering tribes of the desert.

This part of the Sahara is inhabited, or rather traversed, by Moorish tribes, roving between Morocco and Senegal with their scanty flocks. To these miserable Moors, fanatic and cruel as they are, any vessel cast upon the coast by a storm is a tempting prey. At the first sign of a wreck, these wretches fall upon the luckless castaways, strip them, and leave them to die of hunger and thirst on the burning sands, or else they carry them off into slavery, and sell them in the market-places of Timbuctoo or Adrar.

Therefore, the column of fire being seen by a horseman

of the tribe of Ouled-bon-Séba, he hastened to notify one of the parties encamped a few miles away from the cape. The Moors, foreseeing a shipwreck, rushed in a body to the coast.

Captain Green had spent the night on the lookout with his men. Although not fearing any attack from the land, he posted armed sentinels on the outskirts of his camp.

The first peep of dawn revealed to one of these guards a number of human forms prowling about the beach and cape. The man ran to inform the captain, who had scarcely left his tent when he saw that a large party of Moors had established themselves on the edge of the bay. The boats had put off to the Jackson on the approach of these marauders, thus cutting off all chance of escape for the men on shore.

At the first glance, Captain Green grasped the really critical situation in which he was placed. His sailors speedily rallied round him, ready for a fight; but it was evident that the scanty band would have tough work to cut a path through the Moors, who were far more numerous and were all armed with guns. On the other hand, these latter seemed somewhat surprised; having hastened thither to rob a disabled ship, they gazed with amazement at the Jackson riding at anchor in the bay, and the crew undoubtedly struck them as much more formidable than the handful of dejected castaways whom they had expected to find.

Hesitating thus on both sides, the two parties consulted together. Captain Green was first to come to a decision. Arranging his men in line on the crest of the hill, he ordered them to stand ready to protect him, while he advanced to parley with the natives. Accompanied only by Daniel, he walked towards the enemy, waving a white handkerchief.

His approach seemed to excite a lively emotion among the Moors. They uttered loud cries and curses, proving that they were not agreed as to the reception to be given to the captain. Finally the peace party carried the day, for two men stepped out of the crowd and advanced to meet him.

One of them was an old fellow, with a long white beard, finely chiselled features, and venerable air, but, like all the Moors, sly and hypocritical in expression. He was wrapped in an immense white burnous, fastened round his neck by a rope of twisted camel's hair, and displaying a pair of loose red Zouave trousers beneath its ample folds.

His companion, a blubber-lipped Berber, almost a negro, was an active young man, whose eyes rolled fiercely in his head. Covered with rags, he leaned haughtily on a long, damascened gun. They were, undoubtedly, two important personages, two chiefs of the Ouled-bon-Séba.

Approaching the captain, the old man saluted him ma-

jestically with the Arab greeting: "Salam allekoum!" adding in the purest French, "Are you French?"

"Yes," said the captain unhesitatingly.

"I have been at Algiers," continued the Moor, "and I know the French. I am Ali-ben-Mansour, sheik of the Ouled-bon-Séba. Why are you in our territory?"

"What is that to you?" replied the captain. "We came yesterday and shall probably leave to-morrow; our presence cannot annoy you to any great extent. If you know the French, you must know that they are the friends of the Arabs, but that they will not put up with tyranny. Tell your men who we are and order them to retire."

"I cannot," replied the sheik. "By an old law of the land, every ship which touches here becomes the property of the Ouled-bon-Séba. Your ship is ours: if you wish to keep it you must pay a ransom."

The captain was about to answer this impudent proposition as it deserved; but a sudden thought cut short his half-uttered sentence, and he added: "In all my voyages I have respected the laws of whatever country I might chance to visit. I am therefore ready to comply with your demands. I have no further use for the ship which you see lying yonder, for I expect another to join me at this very spot. I accordingly agree to surrender my ship to your men, but on condition that you first permit us to take away all necessary supplies."

"I will communicate your offer to my comrade, Bou-

Sliman, Aga of Râch." And the old man translated the captain's remarks into Arabic.

"The man is a coward," said the aga.

"Or perhaps a traitor," replied the sheik; "but leave him to me. Does not the Prophet say, 'The believer's folly has more wisdom in it than the infidel's discretion'?" and turning to the officer he said: "Bou-Sliman accepts. Return to your men. We will make way for you to pass, having faith in the promise that you have given us."

Captain Green and the cabin boy returned to their camp. The former saw that he must profit by the friendly feeling of the Moors, and take refuge on the Jackson, where they could more securely await the Atlanta's arrival. He therefore collected his men, recommended the utmost prudence, and forbade them to use their knives unless it came to the last extreme. A few additional handfuls of alfa grass were thrown upon the bonfire, which blazed up with renewed vigor; and then the little party, leaving their camp, took the path to the beach.

At their approach the Moors moved away, and stood in solid phalanx at the foot of the sand-hills. They uttered wild yells, a sort of savage battle-cry, as the procession filed by them; but not a gun was lifted, or other token of hostility given.

The captain, reassured by this condition of things, hailed the boats, which, putting off from the Jackson, made for the shore. They were close at hand, the sailors broke

their ranks preparatory to embarking, when a terrible volley of shot from the Moors cast confusion among them, wounding and killing several of their number. In the twinkling of an eye, the little band was surrounded by the savage horde, and a frightful conflict followed. The sailors, drawing their long knives, fought hand to hand with the Moors, while Captain Green, a revolver in each hand, cleared a space around him.

In spite of the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, the sailors had the advantage; the Moors were already quitting the field, when the swarthy Bou-Sliman, covered with blood, rushed towards Daniel, and seizing him in his strong arms, lifted him from the ground and ran off with him. But Penguin heard his cries; and, nothing heeding, armed only with his sheath-knife, he flew after the Moor and plunged his weapon into his back. The giant dropped his victim and rolled to the ground, while the young Canadian, helping Daniel, still dizzy with surprise, to rise to his feet, led him back to the ranks of his friends.

Just at this moment a loud report shook the loose soil of the foot-hills. A superb steamer entered the bay, and boats loaded with men put hastily off for the shore.

At the sight of this unexpected reinforcement, the Moors took flight, and vanished behind the sand-hills.

"Friends, it is the Atlanta!" cried Captain Green.

"Three cheers for the Atlanta!" was the simultaneous shout of the sailors.

The first boat reached the shore. An officer leaped out and ran towards the captain of the Jackson, who, offering him his hand, said simply: "You are punctual, Mr. Evans."



"The Atlanta."

CHAPTER X.

PENGUIN.

THAT same day the Jackson, stripped of everything of any value, was given to the flames, and Captain Green, with his faithful crew, took possession of the Atlanta, which steamed rapidly away from those inhospitable shores.

It was the first time in his life that Daniel had ever set foot on a man-of-war; he was therefore greatly amazed at the stately aspect of the cruiser.

The Atlanta was a magnificent iron steamer of more than three thousand tons. A powerful screw gave her a speed of fifteen knots an hour; the tall, clipper-rigged masts

could carry her at an equally rapid rate if her coal gave out or any accident happened to the engine. One look at her long, slender hull and her bare, straight-sheered deck, was enough to prove that her constructor's only thought was to give her a rate of speed superior to that of any ordinary man-of-war or merchantman. With all steam on, and her heavy spread of canvas filled by a favoring wind, the Atlanta literally flew over the water like some superb bird of prey.

If the bird had wings, it had beak and claws as well. Two fine howitzers planted on deck, one at the bow, the other at the stern, enabled her to strike the flying foe or to arrest pursuit, while twelve cannon, concealed between decks, when it came to a fight revealed their brazen jaws, hidden in ordinary times by the closed ports.

The interior of the ship was arranged with the utmost care. The hold contained spacious magazines, in which ammunition, coal, water, and copious supplies of food were stored; other compartments, still empty, were reserved for the booty to be taken from the enemy. The engine, with its vast motors and huge boilers, occupied the centre of the hull. Between the hold and the deck was the great "between-decks," containing the quarters of the crew forward, the guns and cockpit in the centre; and in the stern the state-rooms of the officers and the captain's cabin, fitted up with extreme luxury and taste.

Daniel and Penguin were established in cosy quarters,

provided with two good berths, in the stern, near the ward-room. The two boys thus enjoyed the privilege conferred on them by the captain when he attached them to the private service of the ship's officers, for the other cabin boys were sent forward with the sailors.

Admirable cleanliness and order prevailed in every part of the vessel, and, as Penguin admiringly said, you could eat your dinner off the Atlanta's deck with as much pleasure as if it were the finest table in the world.

It was no easy matter to keep in bounds a body of one hundred and fifty men, comprising adventurers of every nationality. To see Captain Green, with his red face and jolly smile, pacing the deck of his ship with a slow and heavy tread, one would have imagined him the very last man to be entrusted with so arduous a task. But beneath his rather vulgar exterior, the captain had an upright, generous soul, a cultured mind, and iron will. If his noisy mirth enlivened his men, he could quiet them with a word, or, if necessary, with a gesture. One day, a German sailor giving him a rough answer, the brave captain took him by the belt with one hand and tossed him contemptuously to the other end of the deck.

There was plenty of hard work on board the Atlanta. Besides the scrupulous neatness required, and the necessary working of the ship, the captain insisted upon gun-drills and constant boat-exercises. Assisted by Evans, and Nichols, the mate of the Jackson, Captain Green labored inces-

santly to perfect his crew. With this object in view, he steered the Atlanta in a southerly direction, unwilling to begin action until he was sure of his ship and his men.

Daniel, who was daily more gratified by the captain's kindness, felt that it was a pleasure to sail under such a leader. Forgetting all his schemes for making a fortune, he gave himself up to the enjoyment of this active life, beneath a fair sky, upon one of the smoothest seas on earth.

After a busy day, he spent a happy evening with his friend Penguin. Since the latter had rescued him from death, Daniel's budding friendship had turned to deep love. He considered the amiable, modest Canadian as the model of every virtue. He opened his heart to him, confiding all his sorrows and his past faults to him; but he was silent concerning his discovery of Bastien Moreau's secret, although the plan of the mine never left his pocket.

At night, when the crew, resting from the day's labors, gathered together in the bows to sing or play cards, the two boys nestled in some dark corner, behind a heap of ropes, and exchanged confidences.

"You are very lucky," said Penguin to Daniel one day, when the latter was talking of the kind parents whom he had left behind in Castel. "When you go back to them, they will forgive all your faults, while I am utterly alone

in the world. I have no family but the crew of the Atlanta. I have nothing to tie me to life except our captain, whom I love with my whole heart."

"And I," said Daniel reproachfully. "Am I not your friend?"

"Yes, but we shall have to part before long. You are only here by accident, and at the first opportunity to carry out your plans for the future, you will be off."

"You shall go with me, and we will make our fortunes together."

"Impossible," replied the young Canadian. "I owe everything to the captain, and I shall never leave him so long as I can be of any use to him; and then I fear I should sadly miss his loud voice, promising me the cat-o'-nine-tails, while his hand never gave me anything but caresses. He is not like Mr. Nichols, who says little but strikes hard."

"Then you have no relations in Canada?" asked Daniel.

"Not that I know of. My father, Denis Laverton, — for you must have guessed that Penguin was not my real name; it is a nickname, to which I am so accustomed that it seems quite natural to me. My real name is Martial."

"Martial, — that is a nice name," said Daniel. "I shall always call you Martial; I like it much better than Penguin."

"As you like. I was going to tell you that my father,

Denis Laverton, was a voyager in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company."

"What do you mean by 'a voyager'?"

"That is the Canadian name for the agents whom the Company sends out among the Indian tribes of its vast territory, to collect furs and skins. My father married at Quebec. My mother, unable to endure the severe climate of the North, lived there with me, their only child. I was eight years old when she died, and I was left for some time dependent on the charity of neighbors, who took me in. On his return from one of his long journeys, my father found himself a widower, with a son to support. As he had neither fortune nor family, he scarcely knew what to do with me; but, in spite of my delicate looks, I was strong and full of courage. I therefore begged him not to leave me in Quebec but to take me with him. He finally yielded to my prayers, and we soon started out. The Company had recently made him voyager to Fort Enterprise, one of the most northerly posts, near Great Slave Lake.

"We had to travel two whole months before we reached the fort. I, who had spent my childhood on the green, fertile shores of the St. Lawrence, felt a bitter pang when we reached our journey's end, after crossing the vast desert plains of the northwest. The fort was composed simply of three or four wooden huts, with a few stores for the furs, all surrounded by a high palisade made of pine-tree trunks.

So far, it resembled all the others which we had passed on our way, but the surrounding country made it seem the most horrible spot on earth.

"You saw the Desert of Sahara the other day? Well, Cape Bojador, with its glaring sand-hills and bright blue sea, is a paradise compared to the country in which I was condemned to live. Imagine a vast plain, frightful in its monotony, thinly sprinkled with dwarf pines and scrubby birches, stretching between two great bodies of water, Great Bear Lake to the north, and Great Slave Lake to the south. For a few weeks the sun warmed the plain, and life seemed barely possible; but from the month of August the snow spread its white shroud over all, and it never melted before May, and sometimes not until June.

"The only inhabitants of the fort were two of the Company's agents with their families, making in all eleven persons. We were frequently visited by Indians, if I may give that name to the miserable Esquimaux who frequent those frozen regions; but during the three hardest months of the winter we were shut up in our houses, cut off from all communication with the rest of the world."

"Oh, how frightful!" exclaimed Daniel.

"Yes, indeed it was," continued Penguin, with a sigh; "and yet the three years which I spent in those icy wastes still seem to me the most beautiful of my life. I soon grew used to the rough way of living. My father, who

was a skilful hunter, took me with him on his expeditions through the woods, and taught me to set traps, to track animals by their footprints, and to know the different species. We visited the Esquimau camps up as far as the Great Copper-Mine River, which rises in the Polar Sea. After a time I became intimate with the children of the two agents, and when I returned to the fort, I felt as if I were coming home. Yes, I was happy, very happy.

"This happiness was of brief duration. One day an Indian messenger brought my father a letter from one of the directors, informing him that they had given him the command of Fort Selkirk on the Yukon River. This was an unexpected advancement for my father; but still I saw that he regretted leaving his old mates. His mission was, moreover, a very delicate one, requiring much tact. Fort Selkirk had been built a few years before, near the boundaries of Alaska, and then abandoned. The Company now wished to reoccupy it, in order to confirm their possession of this territory, which a Russian society of fur-seekers disputed with them. My father's instructions were to proceed first to Fort Halkett, lying to the south of Great Slave Lake.

"It was then April, but it would take us at least five months to reach Fort Selkirk. We had no time to lose, and we set out immediately on receipt of our orders. We reached the Mackenzie River, and went up the valley of the Penny River, so called by the old voyagers because

its bed is covered with little, round, shiny pebbles, like coins.

"It 's a hard task, I can tell you, for a boy of eleven to travel on foot, for months, in so rugged a region. Occasionally we came across an Indian settlement where we spent the night; but more often we had to content ourselves with a bed on the ground before a large fire of pine-branches.

"However, we were both in good health, though greatly fatigued, when we reached Fort Halkett, picturesquely situated on the bank of the Penny River, at the foot of a chain of the Rocky Mountains.

"There we remained a month, not to rest, but to wait for the sledges and dogs needed to carry all the supplies required for our establishment. This delay was the cause of all the misfortunes which befell us."

"What could you do with dogs?" asked Daniel.

"The dog," replied Penguin, "is a most necessary animal in those countries. The cold being too intense for oxen or horses, the sledges, which take the place of wagons, are entirely drawn by dogs; and I assure you that the poor beasts do their work well, running rapidly over the frozen ground.

"At last, all was ready, and we left Fort Halkett. Besides my father and myself, our expedition included two half-breeds and a dozen Indians. As we advanced westward, the country became suddenly gloomy, and the roads

almost impassable. Mountains barred our way, and we found it difficult to cross them with our dogs and sledges. October arrived, and with it regular winter weather, with snow storms and icy squalls. Still we were very far from Fort Selkirk. My father, in spite of his long experience of this region, began to feel uneasy.

"One night we encamped in a narrow valley after a painful march. The dogs could go no farther. We tried to kindle a fire; the wind prevented us. At last we wrapped ourselves in our furs, and lay down on the snow to sleep. Towards midnight I was roused by a violent shake, but I was so benumbed with cold that I could hardly move. It was my father, who, awakened by the storm, had dragged me forth from the snow which completely covered me. He took me in his arms and carried me to some high rocks which overlooked our halting-place. A whirlwind of snow swept madly through the valley. In vain we shouted to our companions: there was no answer; and in the morning, when day dawned, we saw nothing before us but a vast field of snow. The poor wretches, surprised in their sleep, rested forever beneath this cold shroud.

"Nor was our fate much better. What was to become of us, alone in this awful desert? Our terrified dogs had fled or were swallowed up by the tempest. Digging down into the snow, we recovered one sledge, and loading ourselves with provisions, we left this valley of death.



"Continue to travel towards the southwest. You will reach the sea and be saved." — Page 131.

"We could no longer hope to reach Fort Selkirk; to return to Fort Halkett was equally impossible. My father recollected that another of the Company's posts, Fort Mumford, lay towards the southwest, and we turned our steps in that direction.

"Alas! after travelling for a fortnight, our provisions gave out, and the fort was still remote, for all we knew. My father, though stronger than I, was exhausted. He walked with great difficulty, and we advanced but slowly. I have always suspected that my dear father deprived himself of food to feed me. For several days our sole box of biscuits diminished very gradually.

"At last, one night, when darkness compelled us to rest, my father said:—

"'I feel, my poor Martial, that I shall not last much longer. My strength is exhausted and I am overcome by cold. I am dying. Continue to travel towards the southwest. You will reach the sea, and you will be saved, for the Indians have numerous settlements on the seashore.'

"In vain I strove to encourage and reanimate him. As he said, he could struggle no longer with the cold, and before day dawned I pressed to my heart naught but a frozen corpse. I could not bear to leave my dear father, but was forced to bury him in the snow and to resume my journey.

"Three days after, dragging myself painfully along, I

came suddenly upon an Indian encampment. The poor natives received me hospitably and treated me with the greatest kindness. I spent the rest of the winter with them, and the following spring I went to Vancouver, the capital of British Columbia.

"The Columbians were less charitable to me than the Indians. Wandering along the streets of that English city, I was literally perishing of hunger, repulsed and rejected everywhere, when one day a sea-captain whom I had followed, begging him to help me, turned upon me, saying: —

"'A rascal of your size ought not to be begging.'

"'I am hungry, sir,' I replied.

"'If you are hungry, why don't you work?'

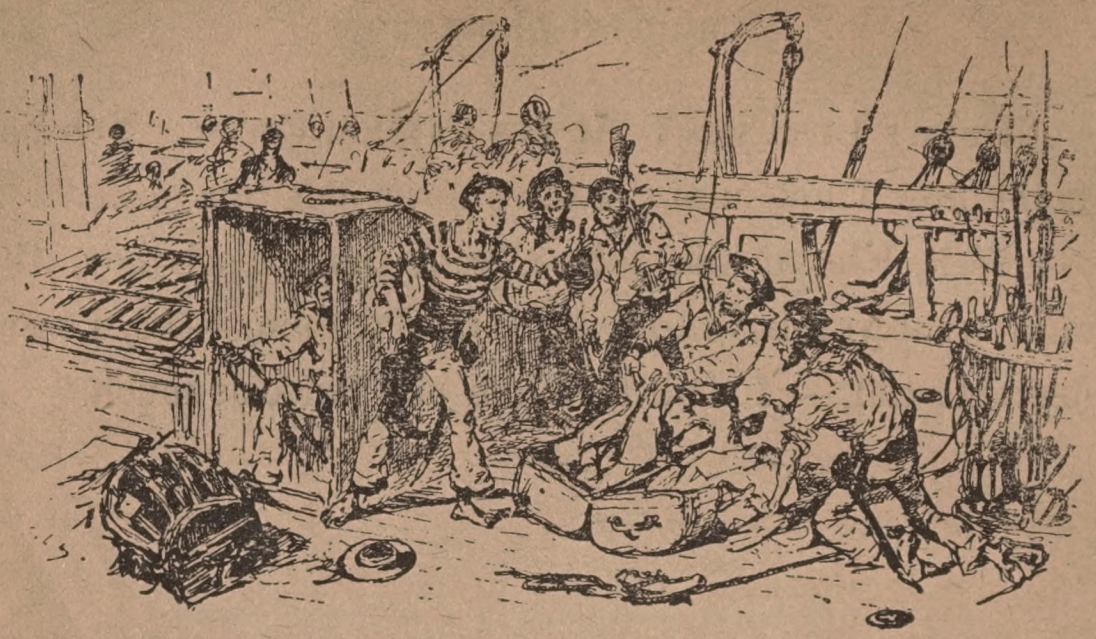
"'I should be glad to work, but I 'm hungry.'

"My tone and looks must have been pitiful, for the captain, without a word, took my hand and led me along. As he walked quickly and I was very weak, I could scarcely keep pace with him. At last my strength failed me and I came to a standstill. Then the brave fellow, without an instant's hesitation, took me in his arms and carried me. I was soon on board his ship, where I was nursed back to health. The captain engaged me as cabin boy, and as I still wore my close-fitting trapper's dress, made of furs, the sailors gave me the name of Penguin."

"Who was this captain?" said Daniel.

"Did n't I tell you? It was Captain Green. You may fancy how I love him. I have never left him since."

"Well, I loved him before," said the French boy, "but after what you have told me, poor Penguin, — no, I mean, dear Martial, — I shall love him just twice as much."



"Confusion ran riot."

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTURE OF THE BLUE BOY.

After several days of hard drill, which put the men in good condition, the captain, now sure of his crew, ordered the ship to be headed to the north. The Atlanta, taking her course, cruised about the thirty-sixth parallel, between the Azores and the Canaries. These two groups of islands form the boundaries of the great water-road connecting Europe with southern countries. All ships trading with South America, southern Africa, or any city in the extreme east, are obliged to take this course both in coming and going. Therefore the privateer had chosen her position very wisely. Lying in wait on this great international thoroughfare, she watched for her prey.

The very number of ships plowing these seas made the cruiser's labors most arduous. No sooner was a sail signalled on the horizon than the Atlanta, her steam being always up, hurried towards the merchantman; then, on coming in range of her, the captain hoisted his flag. According to maritime etiquette, the trader instantly replied by showing his colors, which were invariably those of England, France, or some other neutral nation. The Atlanta's politeness was wasted, and she was forced to continue on her way for a brief time like any peaceful steamer, safe to turn about and swoop down upon another vessel with all speed.

For a month the corsair ploughed the sea without meeting a single United States ship. The coal was almost out, and must soon be renewed at Las Palmas, a port of the Canaries.

The crew began to grumble, not loudly indeed, for the greatest malcontents feared the captain too much to complain before his face. Captain Green himself did not disguise his disgust.

"It is incomprehensible," he said to his mate. "Those confounded Yankees have vanished as completely as if they had never existed. I can't believe, Evans, that your two captures frightened them to such an extent."

"I acted under orders, Captain."

"Certainly, and I am not blaming you for it. A good hunter traps his game when he finds it. But, after all,

you can 't have caught them all, deuce take it! There must be some left. I am rather suspicious of the English frigate which we met off Gibraltar. It must be she who put a flea in the ears of our Yankees. What business can it be of the English? Let them come out openly for the North, or else cease to protect her craft!"

Just at this moment they heard the clear voice of Penguin, who was on the lookout on the cross-trees, shouting: "A sail off the port-quarter!"

"I 'll ease my mind now!" cried Captain Green. "Forward, Evans! I 'll go up myself and see what the wind is bringing us"; and armed with his spy-glass, he climbed into the shrouds, which trembled beneath his weight; but, nothing daunted, he mounted to the top. From this height the ship signalled was plainly visible, her lines clearly outlined against the horizon. The captain directed his glass to that point.

"I won't be fooled again," he muttered a moment later. "All the flags in the world won't make me believe that this ship is not rightfully mine. I should be a downright land-lubber not to know a Baltimore trader by that elegant rigging and those sharp bows."

And stooping towards the deck, he shouted: "West by southwest, straight ahead! We 've got her now."

An instant after he was impatiently pacing the deck. The frigate sailed too slowly for his ardor. He ordered more steam put on, and the sails trimmed. Every man was set to work; each stood to his post.

At last the merchantman was within a mile of the Atlanta. She was a superb three-master, of heavy tonnage, but lightly laden, and well fitted for a race.

The corsair hoisted her flag; the merchantman slowly returned her salute, and Captain Green could not repress an exclamation when he saw the scarlet flag go up.

"By Jingo!" (his favorite oath) "the scoundrel is hoisting the English Jack."

A comical disappointment also appeared on the faces of the sailors, as they saw this fine prey slipping through their fingers.

The captain seemed irresolute, then suddenly exclaimed: "Order the Englishman to heave to and send a boat alongside, and strengthen the invitation with a blank cartridge. We'll see what happens next. I am determined to have a clear conscience for once."

"Aren't you afraid," remarked Lieutenant Evans, "that you'll get us into trouble with the British Admiralty?"

"I fear nothing. Are you blind that you don't recognize a Baltimore clipper? I think that the rascal has put on a false nose. Well, if he has really turned English, he can show me his papers. I shall make him an apology, and it will be all right. We are not highway robbers, are we?"

Paying no attention to the Atlanta's signals, the trader sailed straight ahead; besides which, she lowered her flag as a species of defiance. Profiting by the wind, which was

favorable to her, she set her studding sails and spread a cloud of canvas, as if to double her speed.

This manœuvre made the captain laugh.

"What did I tell you, Evans?" said he. "The Yankee is not so smart as I thought. He has taken to his heels, in spite of his flag, as if anything could outsail the Atlanta!" And turning to the gunners: "Pepper her, my boys, but be easy about it, you know; just give her a little scare. We don't want to spoil her cargo."

The order was hardly issued when a shot was fired, and a shell, hissing through the air, burst a few yards behind the trader, throwing up a high column of water. A second shot went through the rigging. The next few shots were without result; the fugitive kept her distance, but a shell soon shattered her mizzenmast.

Seeing that the game was becoming earnest, the Englishman put the helm against the wind.

"Cease firing!" shouted Captain Green as he saw this manœuvre; but at the same instant a shot was heard, and a bullet shivered the starboard bulwarks of the three-master.

Staggering, the trader hoisted the white flag and lowered her sails. At the same time a boat put off. The Atlanta, keeping on her course, took up a position abreast of her, within easy hail.

Directly after, the captain of the three-master stepped upon the deck of the privateer. He was a tall, thin man,

of a bilious complexion, with a short, straggling beard under his chin. He seemed frantic with rage, and without returning Captain Green's salute, exclaimed in a shrill voice: "How long, sir, have United States ships been in the habit of firing on peaceful English traders? I shall state the ravages which you have committed on my vessel, at the nearest port, and report you to the admiralty council as pirates. I demand an apology and an indemnity for this insult."

"All very fine, Mr. Captain," replied Captain Green, "but be calm, I beg. If your accent does not deceive me, I would swear that you are a Yankee, at least by birth, and, by that reckoning, your eyes must be sharp enough to see that the flag which I fly is not that of the North American Union, but that of the Southern Confederacy, of the slave-holders, as your fellow-citizens would say. Besides, I am quite ready to show you my commission, which authorizes me to cruise in all waters and to capture all ships flying the Federal flag."

"Very good," responded the would-be Englishman; "but you must have seen that I fly the British flag."

"Drop that," said Captain Green. "Although a sailor, I don't care a fig for your flag. If you are English, you have your ship's papers."

"My papers? Certainly. Here is my charter-party, proving that the firm of Nichols & Co. —"

"English, of course?"

"Of course. The firm of Nichols & Co., of Shanghai, consigned me with a cargo of tea —"

"English?" asked Captain Green.

"No, sir, Chinese; consigned to the firm of Shuttlewood."

"Of —?"

"Of New York."

"Of New York, a city famed for its loyalty to the queen of England. Come, Captain," continued Captain Green in a stern voice, "cease joking. I warn you that you are my prisoner, and that if you make another attempt to deceive me, I will hang you up high and dry at the main-yard, as a traitor. Your name?"

"Captain Cummings."

"And your ship?"

"The Blue Boy."

"From what port?"

"Baltimore," reluctantly replied the poor fellow.

"What did I tell you, Evans?" said Captain Green triumphantly. "Well, Captain Cummings," he resumed seriously, "I regret to tell you that, in virtue of the powers vested in me, I must take immediate possession of your vessel, the Blue Boy, and give it to the flames after stripping it of all articles of value to my crew or myself."

"Impossible, Captain!" cried the horrified Yankee. "You would not do such a thing. I am ready to pay whatever ransom you require. My signature is well

known, and my draughts will be honored at sight in Liverpool or London, as you choose."

"I see that you still take me for a pirate," said Captain Green. "I have no use for your money. In my quality of privateer, recognized by my own government, I must needs do all in my power to destroy your national commerce. I have a perfect right to seize your cargo, and sell it if necessary, to pay my crew, having no other means of doing so; but I cannot negotiate with you." And turning to his officers, he said: "Nichols, show Mr. Cummings to a state-room and set a guard to watch him. As for you, Evans, take possession of the Blue Boy."

The captain's orders were speedily executed. While the Yankee captain was made fast below, the boats of the Atlanta boarded the American three-master, and the crew sprang upon her deck. The American sailors made some attempt at resistance, but were soon bound hand and foot, and transferred to the Atlanta.

If privateers are not pirates, they only differ from them in the patriotic side of their mission, — a mission which has a lofty aim, since it furnishes a crushed and oppressed nation with a last weapon with which to defend its independence. France has more than once resorted to this desperate weapon. But if we set aside this respectable argument, it is, as we said, very hard to distinguish between privateers and pirates.

The sailors no sooner set foot on the Blue Boy's deck

than they set to work to despoil her. Some opened the hatches and hauled the cargo from the hold; others stripped the state-rooms and saloon. The most crafty stole into the store-room and poured themselves out huge bumpers of brandy. In a word, confusion ran riot.

Daniel looked on with amazement. He could not understand the indifference of good Mr. Evans, who stood amidships, watching the pillage.

"All this would surprise you less, my dear Daniel," said Penguin, "if you knew what a bitter grudge every one of us bears to the Yankees. How can I tell you all the atrocities which we have been forced to endure at their hands? Mr. Evans, whom you see yonder, had an old father and mother living on a beautiful plantation in Alabama: the negroes, urged on by the Yankees, murdered them both and burned their home. Nichols, who was overseer on a great sugar plantation near Baton Rouge, was tied to a post by the slaves, and left for dead after they had nearly cut him to pieces with whips. And was not Captain Green's ship, his only fortune, taken from him in New York harbor, on pretence that he was a secessionist? And although he was snatched from the hands of the mob, which was dragging him to the gallows, it was only to throw him into jail, whence he escaped by a miracle."

"Not by a miracle, my boy," interrupted Mr. Evans, who had overheard the last words; "for it was you who came and told me where my old friend was imprisoned, and you

were most helpful in getting him over the walls of the jail."

And turning to Daniel, he added: "You see this worthy fellow. Well, I advise you always to follow his example, for I don't know a braver or more honest little soul than he." Then seizing the silver whistle which hung from his neck by a cord, he blew two or three shrill blasts. Instantly, as if by magic, silence took the place of uproar. The sailors, leaving their various occupations, ranged themselves respectfully in a double line before their officer.

"My lads," said the latter, "the captain allowed you half an hour. The half hour is over: you will therefore remove all the luggage and personal property of the officers and sailors of the Blue Boy, that it may be returned to them upon their landing. Is everything ready for the firing of the ship?"

"Yes, Captain," said a boatswain's mate. "I have seen to the laying of several trains of powder, connected by slow-matches, which I will light, if you order it, as I leave the vessel."

"Very well, then, let us take to the boats!" said the officer; and they returned to the Atlanta, loaded with spoils.

"Did you look out for my share?" Captain Green asked Evans.

"Here it is, Captain," replied the latter, handing him a

silver chronometer, marked, as is usual, with the name of the captured ship.

"Good," replied the captain. "This chronometer shall form the first article of a collection which I promised to bring back to our President, Jefferson Davis. As for the money taken, it will be put into the ship's treasury, and the cargo will be put into the hold. And the vessel? Are my orders obeyed?"

"Look, Captain!"

Already, indeed, a cloud of smoke issued from every port and seam in the luckless Blue Boy, as it drifted slowly along with the current.

The flames soon reached the rigging, and shortly after the hull was seen smouldering like a fiery furnace. The shades of night quickly increased the awful grandeur of the spectacle. Then suddenly a bluish jet darted heavenwards, a fearful explosion was heard, and all was dark. A long and loud "Hurrah!" hailed the disappearance of the Yankee craft.



"The two boys touched their glasses."

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNEXPECTED ALLY.

THE Atlanta resumed her course. Sailing in an easterly direction before the wind, she found herself next morning lying off the island of Madeira, where Captain Green had decided to land his prisoners.

The rising sun gilded the houses of Funchal, the charming little capital of the island, stretching amphitheatre-like along the sea-shore, upon the radiant slopes of a mountain which rears its bald head proudly upwards to the sky.

The frigate, her flag flying at the mast, anchored in mid-harbor, with a large number of trading vessels, all English or French; still, a Yankee ship would have been perfectly safe there, for the Atlanta could not have harmed her in these waters, protected by the Portuguese flag.

An officer of the port at once boarded the Atlanta, which he took for a peaceful American steamer, and he was much surprised when Captain Green revealed the true nature of his ship. The officer was unwilling to give the freedom of the port to the privateer without consulting the governor, and the frigate was forced to remain all day without communication with the land.

This was anything but satisfactory to the crew, who longed to get on shore and spend their prize money in the Funchal taverns as soon as possible. Their impatience gave way to deep disappointment when the officer returned at nightfall and announced to Captain Green that the governor would permit him to land his prisoners and take in supplies, but expressly forbade him to send any of the crew on shore, the only exception being in favor of the captain and his officers. The sailors grumbled loudly; some even hinted that, if the captain allowed them, they would think it a good lark to seize Funchal and pillage the shops; but no one dared make the suggestion to him.

Next day Captain Cummings and his men were sent on shore. Captain Green also went, to arrange for the sale of the captured tea, and the purchase of provisions. The two

cabin boys, being attached to his personal service, went with him. As the captain's business was somewhat lengthy, he gave his young favorites several hours' leave. "Mind," he said as he left them, "don't get into any mischief, and don't stray too far away."

"Never fear, Captain," said Penguin as he took Daniel's arm and dragged him gayly along.

"As this is the first lark we have had together, I must treat," said the young Canadian. "I think I see a tavern: that's just the thing."

"A tavern!" said the astonished Daniel. "Are you going to a tavern?"

"Pray, why not?"

"I should never have suspected you of such a thing, and I'm sure that the captain would n't like it. You know he is very strict on that point."

"Oh, I see," said Penguin, laughing; "you think that I'm going to do as the sailors do. No, my boy, that's not it. You see, that ever since I knew we were coming here, two days ago, I've had a plan. I am determined to treat you to a glass of real Madeira."

"True, I quite forgot that we were in Madeira. If that's all, I accept. I've always heard people say: 'This is real Madeira. This is not real Madeira,' and as I have never tasted either, I shall be very glad to know the truth of the matter."

"Well, here is a shop where we can get the required in-

formation, for I see that the sign reads 'Vinho e Liquores,' which must mean 'Wines and Liquors.'"

The two boys boldly entered, and Penguin, stepping up to the counter, behind which stood a mulatto with amazingly woolly hair, said quickly: "Two glasses of Madeira!"

"We have none," was the laconic reply. Penguin, feeling sure that he was not understood, repeated his request, and the mulatto again replied: "We have none."

"What, no Madeira?" cried Daniel in his turn.

"No, sir, not at present. We expect a ship from Cette any day, which will bring us a full assortment of the best Madeiras, Malagas, etc. But we have very good brandy — excellent —."

"We don't want either brandy or Madeira from Cette," interrupted Penguin; and he added, with some dignity: "Although we are only cabin boys, we have money to pay for what we order, and we want Madeira wine made in Madeira, and the very best."

"Gentlemen," said the tavern-keeper, in a conciliatory tone, "I have already had the honor to tell you that there is no more" — and he emphasized the words — "Madeira wine in Madeira. Eleven years ago the last vines were destroyed by an insect, were pulled up and thrown away; and the island has never produced a single bottle of wine since."

"But, then," said the incredulous Penguin, "where does all the Madeira come from which is daily consumed all over the world?"

"The best comes from Cette, sir; but I could n't swear that they don't make it elsewhere."

"No Madeira in Madeira!" again muttered Penguin. "I shall never get over it. Give us two small glasses of brandy, which is equally genuine, I suppose. There is nothing but deceit in this world."

The two boys touched their glasses, philosophically tossed off the poor corn-brandy which the mulatto offered them, and went away arm in arm.

"I have an idea that that fellow was making fun of us," said Penguin, still full of his disappointment. "Let us go on a little way out of the town; then we shall see whether there are any vines left."

The tavern-keeper was right: no sign of a vine was to be seen in the country; but to make up for it, the two friends were overwhelmed with delight at the magnificent orange-trees which grew in regular groves on each side of the road. By paying a very small sum, a peasant gave them permission to eat as much fruit as they chose, and they fairly gorged themselves with the golden, perfumed pulp.

That done, as it was growing late, the friends prepared to return to the ship. They came into a narrow street, leading to the harbor, and lined with taverns, from whence they heard shouts and singing, which testified to the presence of numerous sailors.

The boys were hurrying on, when they were suddenly

hailed rudely in a tipsy voice, and turning, they saw a stout sailor close beside them.

"Why are you running away so fast?" said the man. "You were n't so shy the other day, when you had your thieves of the Atlanta to back you. But you sha'n't get away until I have settled your reckoning with a good smart drubbing."

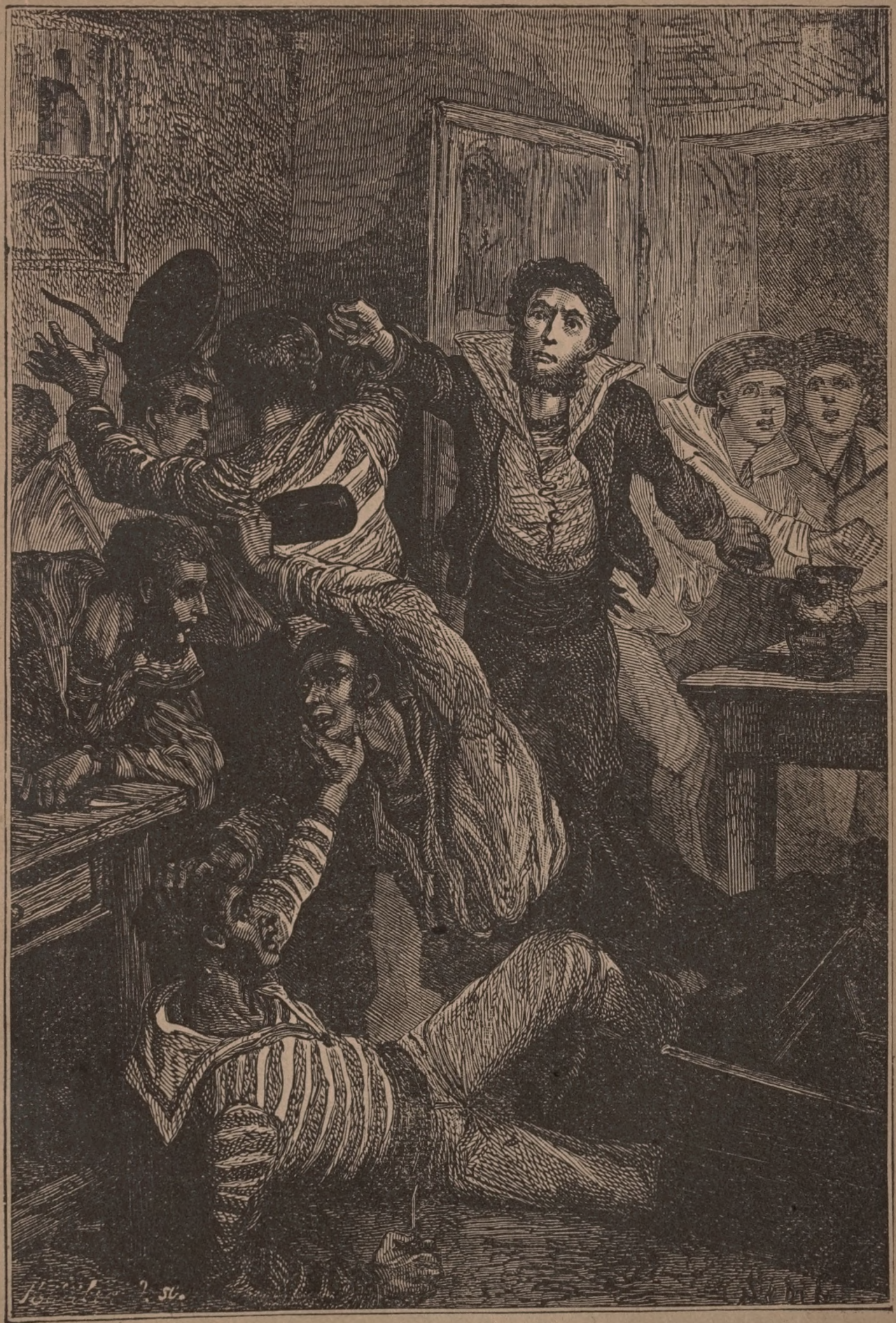
"Come on!" said Penguin to Daniel. "The fellow is drunk."

But already the sailor, who was no other than one of the Blue Boy's crew, had seized Daniel roughly by the arm and shaken him severely. Penguin, who had taken to his heels, flew to the rescue; and the two boys would soon have mastered their tormentor, who was disabled by intoxication, if other Yankee sailors, attracted by the noise, had not hastened out to take their comrade's part.

The poor cabin boys were dragged into the tavern, and there, surrounded by these cut-throats, they struggled manfully, but not without receiving many hard thumps. Their situation was becoming alarming, and they were in a terrible plight, when an unexpected ally suddenly appeared.

The sailors thronging the neighboring taverns, drawn to the spot by the uproar, were looking indifferently on at this brutal scene, when Daniel, blinded by blows, and terror-stricken, screamed, "Help! help!"

At this appeal, several spectators plunged into the thick



"Daniel and Penguin, at last getting free, ran off at full speed." — Page 153.

of the fight, and took part with the boys. One of them, conspicuous for his great height and his fur cap, fought like a perfect demon, yelling frantically to the Yankees, "Ah, rascals, is this the way you insult Frenchmen! Just wait!"

What were Daniel's astonishment, surprise, and stupefaction when he recognized in this intrepid ally his old friend, Dominic Martigues.

The latter did not seem to recognize his ward. Besides, he had his hands full, for the fight now became serious. At the cries of the combatants, the guests of all the neighboring taverns rushed into the arena, and French and English fell upon each other without knowing the cause of the quarrel, and simply moved by patriotic motives.

The brawl became general; it was difficult to foretell the result. Daniel and Penguin, at last getting free, profited by the brief respite, and ran off at full speed. One of the combatants rushed after them, but the boys were nimble, and their pursuer would undoubtedly have been distanced if he had not called after them: —

"Hollo, Daniel! Stop, I say, I can't stir another step!"

At the sound of this well-known voice, the boys stopped. A moment later Dominic — for it was he — came up with them, and without the slightest hesitation or embarrassment, clasped Daniel in his arms, and embraced him with every sign of the most ardent affection.

"Well, youngster, you don't mean to say that you

don't know Dominic, your old friend? How glad I am to see you again! It does me good; it seems like old times! How lucky that I was on hand! If it had n't been for me, those scoundrels would have hammered you flat, while as it is, my messmates of the Pretty Polly are on the fair road to teach them a good lesson."

Daniel, confounded by so much assurance, silently stared at the man who had deceived him so outrageously on a former occasion.

"You stare at me as if you did not know me," continued Dominic. "Oh, I see how it is: you are offended with me for leaving you behind at the Three Parrots. I could not help it. The captain of the Pretty Polly did not want a cabin boy. I preferred to avoid farewells. I was too loath to leave you. And then I recommended you to Mrs. Ginestous. I hope that she took good care of you."

"Yes, thank you," stammered Daniel, astounded by Dominic's eloquence.

"I see that you've contrived to get well out of the scrape," resumed the latter. "Here you are swelling about like a regular dandy. Are you in the service of the State?"

"No, I am cabin boy on board the Atlanta."

"The deuce! On board the famous Southern privateer! I congratulate you; that's a good berth, you must make a lot of money. And this gentleman?" he added, pointing to Penguin, who stood close by.

"He is my mate on board the Atlanta."

"What's his name?"

"Penguin," replied the young Canadian.

"What's in a name? Your servant, Mr. Penguin; and as we are all friends together, you won't refuse to join us in taking some slight refreshment at the hotel round the corner."

"Impossible," said Daniel. "We must hasten back to the ship. We are behind time now."

They were not behind their time; but as they reached the wharf, they saw the captain coming towards them. Daniel received another embrace from Dominic, who exclaimed, "Good-by, youngster! You know we shall be sure to meet again"; and then the boys jumped into the boat and put off for the ship.

The poor boy was thunderstruck by such impudence. How could this man dare to embrace him and show such friendship for him, after robbing him of a sacred trust? Still, Dominic might be innocent. Perhaps he, Daniel, had not searched thoroughly; perhaps the portfolio had slipped through a crack in the floor.

Once more on board, Penguin was struck by his friend's look of distress. He tried to restore his gay spirits and questioned him tenderly. Daniel was silent, and repulsed every overture.

His meeting with Dominic revived all his slumbering memories, aroused his dreams for the future, and rekindled

his ambitious desires. That night the young cabin boy took advantage of an instant's solitude to re-read the mysterious paper which had dropped from the miner's portfolio, and as he fell asleep, his last thoughts were of Australia, that new Eldorado.



"Captain Green rose."

CHAPTER XIII.

A BOLD STROKE.

THE capture of the Blue Boy seemed to put an end to the Atlanta's long period of inaction. Thenceforth, one capture followed another in rapid succession. Within a few months the bold corsair captured fourteen American merchantmen, which all met with a similar fate; that is, they were burned after the cargo was removed. They did not all fall so easy a prey as the Blue Boy; some, swift sailers, were only taken after a chase of several days; others resisted stoutly. One of them, a vessel trading in southern seas and armed with light ordnance, fought bravely and only surrendered upon being boarded. Captain Green therefore treated his opponent with the honors of war, permitting him and his crew to retain all their personal property.

Ill pleased with the reception accorded him by the Portuguese authorities at Madeira, Captain Green selected the port of Las Palmas in Gran Canaria as his headquarters. This port, the most convenient in those parts, afforded him a safe shelter in stormy weather, and at the same time a good market for the sale of his prizes and the provisioning of his ship. By maritime law, in his quality of privateer he could only remain in the harbor for four consecutive days; but the amiability of the Spanish officials allowed him great latitude in the matter.

And yet Europe began to be startled by this audacious cruiser, stationed at her very gates, and every one was amazed to see that the United States made no attempt to protect her commerce in its hour of danger.

Captain Green himself was astonished at the composure of his adversaries.

"It is impossible," he said, "that the Yankees will leave us alone much longer. One of these days they will send out a fleet, that is, unless their affairs go very badly indeed at home. The captain of the last vessel that we took, told me that our brave Stonewall Jackson whipped Grant only a few months before, and drove him beyond the Potomac. God grant it may be true, and that our poor land may be forever rid of those tyrants!"

Exactly one year from the day upon which Captain Green took command of the Atlanta, she lay at anchor in the harbor of Las Palmas, having just returned from an

expedition. To celebrate the anniversary, the captain gave his men leave to go on shore, and himself invited all the officers to a grand dinner at the best hotel in town. The dinner was superb. Daniel and Penguin had the honor of being present, standing behind the captain's chair. At the close of the meal the guests became somewhat excited and drank various toasts, — to the President of the Southern Confederacy, the captain, the extermination of the Yankees, etc., etc.

Captain Green rose to reply; but before he had uttered a word, the door opened, and admitted the governor of the town, Don Alvarez y Gomez. The brave hidalgo was greeted with a merry shout, and the captain invited him to sit down and join them.

"You see, Don Alvarez," said he, "that we reserved a place for you."

"Thanks, gentlemen," replied the governor. "My official position forbids me to take part in this banquet, although I am thoroughly persuaded that the government of His Catholic Majesty will not long delay its recognition of the Southern Confederacy, which is already united to Spain by many and ancient memories; but until that time I must remain neutral, at least in appearance," he added, with a smile. "At present, I should like a few moments' private conversation with your brave and honored captain."

Captain Green left the table and followed Don Alvarez

from the room. A few minutes later he returned and resumed his seat, but the officers observed that his frank, jolly face was overcast; and silence prevailed among them as they awaited some important communication.

"Gentlemen," said the captain, in a grave tone, "when Don Alvarez entered, I was about to propose a toast which would sum up our every thought and aspiration. Let us drink, gentlemen, to the triumph of our just cause, to the independence of our native land."

Every man rose as by one impulse, and striking their glass together, shouted: "We will give our blood, our life, for those who trust in us!"

"Yes, gentlemen," continued the captain, "the country trusts in you. Wounded, bleeding, torn in every limb, she has charged you with the most perilous of missions; for you are well aware that we should be hung as vile pirates, should we fall into the hands of the foe. Well, the moment has come when we may hope to prove our devotion to our native land. The governor has just imparted to me news of the utmost importance, which he himself learned from a sailor who had deserted. Two Yankee men-of-war anchored at the mouth of the harbor to-night." And turning to the cabin boys, he said: "Daniel, bring in the sailor who is waiting in the next room."

The lad returned, followed by a sailor, who, removing his cap, took up his position in front of the captain.

"Who are you?" sternly asked the latter.

"My name is Hugh Williams, I am a native of the State of Alabama. Pressed on board the Shenandoah, I escaped this very evening on learning that you were in port."

"What interest have you in betraying your superior officers?"

"None, Captain, except to serve my country. I am a secessionist, and have served in General Lee's army. Taken prisoner, I was, as I told you, pressed into the service of the North. I beg you, as a great favor, to engage me for the Atlanta."

"What are the ships which are trying to blockade us?" continued Captain Green.

"The Shenandoah, an iron ship of twenty-four guns, and the Washington, a three-decker of eighty guns."

"I know both those ships," said the captain. "It is well, you may go. I will see what I can do to reward you. Daniel and Penguin, keep an eye on this man! You see, gentlemen, that the United States do us great honor: they send two of their best ships to destroy us. We must contrive to get out of this mouse-trap in which we have allowed ourselves to be caught. We are safe in this port; but it would really be disgraceful to hide here much longer. To get out, we must show fight—"

"Good, Captain!" exclaimed all the officers, animated by the approach of the enemy. "Let us fight them. With you to lead us on, victory is secure."

"I thank you for your confidence, gentlemen; but pray let us consider the question calmly. Do not lose sight of our situation. It is our duty to leave the harbor, but to leave it safe and sound; to fight, but not to rush madly to destruction. If our country had a strong navy, it would matter little if we went bravely down to our graves, so we saved the honor of our flag; but at present the Confederacy has a very small fleet, including my little vessel and the Alabama, commanded by my bold colleague and friend, Admiral Semmes. We two together may succeed in paralyzing the maritime commerce of the Yankees, and thus deal a blow at their wealth, their sole power. The loss of either of us would be a national disaster. Therefore we must strive to get the Atlanta out of the evil pass into which we have brought her, and that as quickly as possible. The moment is propitious; the enemy suppose us to be asleep. Let us try to outwit their vigilance. I will return on board; meantime, do you collect our crew scattered through the town. In an hour I shall sail, without waiting for laggards"; and as the officers sprang to their feet, the captain added, in a voice trembling with emotion: "Believe me, gentlemen, I do great violence to every feeling, save that of patriotism, when I resist my desire to attack these insolent Yankees. But you understand me, our first duty is to save the Atlanta. If we must fight, we will fight. Once more, gentlemen, I drink to the success of the Southern Confederacy."

A final cheer, and the guests left the room.

While Captain Green, with the cabin boys and the deserter, hurried back to the ship, the officers and boatswains searched the taverns of the town and collected the crew. An hour after, when the roll-call was read, not a man was missing. The announcement that all laggards would be left behind produced its due effect.

The lights on the two men-of-war, anchored across the entrance to the harbor, were plainly visible in the distance. The captain ordered all the usual signals to be extinguished, and no lights to be left which could be seen from without. The engineers were ordered to put on a high pressure as quietly as possible, to avoid attracting attention. Meantime Mr. Evans cleared the decks for action. The royals were taken down and the rigging stowed close. The gunners stood at their posts, the cannon were loaded, and everything made ready for an engagement.

The two cabin boys were everywhere at once, flying from one end of the ship to the other carrying orders, as the boatswain's pipe was suppressed.

"Well, it 's getting hot," said Penguin to Daniel, taking advantage of a leisure moment.

"I thought the captain meant to escape under cover of night without a fight."

"Of course, if he can; but just now I heard Mr. Evans tell the second mate that we could not possibly get away

unobserved. The two hostile ships are anchored on either side of the entrance, and, except by some miracle, we must run them down on our way out."

"Very well, then we will run them down," said Daniel confidently.

The captain stationed himself on the bridge, and the two boys hastened after him. All the preparations were complete. The anchors were weighed, and the black mass, with a slow, quivering motion, glided silently forward over the silent sea.

Captain Green directed his course straight towards the enemy. He was within five hundred yards of his foes, when the sound of drums beating the alarm on the Shenandoah and instantly repeated on the Washington, told him that he was discovered. The brave captain bent down to the tube communicating with the engine-room and ordered the men to crowd on all steam. The tall smoke-stacks at once vomited forth thick columns of smoke and sparks, and the Atlanta advanced with marvellous speed.

Was it possible that Captain Green would thus hurl his ship into the very jaws of his terrible opponents? It was running upon sure destruction. The poor frigate could never withstand such a cannonade. So thought the officers when they saw the Atlanta make for the narrow channel between the two ships.

Still it was no longer possible to retreat. The frigate was now directly between the high walls of the Yankee

ships, bristling with cannon. "Fire to larboard and to starboard," cried Captain Green in a voice of thunder. A tremendous volley shook the deck and wrapped it in a cloud of smoke; but the Atlanta had already slipped from the grasp of her antagonists, who, stupefied by the audacity of this manœuvre, and surprised by the rapidity of her movements, were too late to reply.

The Shenandoah, contriving to get her starboard battery free, sent a broadside after her, which covered her deck with shot and flame. The Washington, undoubtedly disabled, could only use her bow chase-guns.

The skirmish was brief. Before the Yankees managed to quit their anchorage, the privateer gained a good start. She was covered with canvas, and when day dawned, had so far distanced the enemy as to be completely lost to sight.

"How could those idiots allow themselves to be so taken by surprise?" said the captain to his officers. "I thought them smarter than that."

"The fact is, Captain," said Evans, "your skill and daring outwitted them. They could never have dreamed that you would make straight for them. If you call that running away, it is a most glorious flight."

"Zounds! perhaps you think that I should have notified them. If I had suspected such gross ignorance, I believe, 'pon honor, I might have run one of them down before they knew it. All the same, it will soon be too hot for us

here. Steer for Ascension, Nichols" ; and seeing Daniel beside him, he added: "You stood to your post bravely, my lad. We shall make a man of you yet. And now we are gradually approaching the land of your dreams. A few more victories like this, and we shall be in Australia or Eldorado."



The Battle.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST FIGHT.

A FEW days after, the Atlanta, proceeding on her southerly course, doubled the Cape of Good Hope. It was probable that the enemy had lost track of her; accordingly Captain Green determined to cruise about the Indian Ocean, keeping well to the south of the Mascarene Isles. This position enabled him to command the route to India, as well as that taken by merchantmen bound for China and Australia, and also to lay in provisions readily either at Mauritius or Reunion.

Now that the Atlanta had entered these waters, Daniel could scarcely contain himself for joy. He knew that he was

still far from Australia; but he knew perfectly well that if Captain Green were again obliged to fly from an enemy stronger than himself, his only refuge would be in the Pacific and the vicinity of Australia. Once there, nothing would be easier than for him to get to Sydney or Melbourne. And as if this event were close at hand, he constantly re-read the fragment from Bastien's journal, and tried to engrave it on his memory word for word, in case any accident should snatch it from him.

His only grief was caused by the thought that he should be parted from Captain Green and perhaps from Penguin. However, he did not despair of taking the young Canadian with him; so he frequently returned to the subject in their many talks together.

"Do tell me," said his friend one day, "why you are so anxious to go to Australia."

"I scarcely know," answered Daniel, with some embarrassment. "The memory of Bastien Moreau's rapid accession to fortune haunts me. I feel as if I might be equally lucky if I were to try."

"But didn't you tell me that the poor miner suffered for years and years before he made his fortune, and that it was a mere chance which enriched him?"

"Yes, but that chance may come to us too. Besides, I know pretty nearly the spot where he found his treasure, and that will certainly help us somewhat."

"Help us? You don't suppose that I shall ever leave

Captain Green, to go in search of a fortune? I can readily fancy that the perilous life which we lead is not to your taste, and that you are anxious to escape from it; but it seems to me that it must always be hard to trust one's future to a lucky chance. It is like our sailors, who run to some drinking-saloon as soon as they land, and gamble away all their earnings in the hope of winning a fortune. You will waste your time and wreck your future in the search for a treasure which honest hard work would bring you much more surely, though slowly. Enter the merchant service: when you have made a few voyages, you can go home to your father and be happy. As for me, here I am, and here I shall remain."

"And if Captain Green gave you leave to go with me?"

"Then I might consider the matter, but I shall never ask him."

The Atlanta's first achievement in her new cruising place was to capture a big Yankee clipper, laden with rice, which was sold at Mauritius.

The English authorities gave her a very chilly reception; still she was allowed to take in provisions and replenish her stock of coal.

That done, she again stood out to sea, and cruised about to the south of Madagascar. She had only been there a few days, when the man on the lookout signalled two ships to the southwest.

The Atlanta instantly made for them. Captain Green, stationed on the bridge, studied the distant vessels through his glass, then suddenly let slip a terrible oath.

"By the mighty Jingo!" he cried, "here we are running ourselves directly into the wolf's jaws! Back her!"

"What is the matter, Captain?" asked Evans, running up in surprise at the order, and supposing that Captain Green had seen a rock or a reef in the ship's course.

"We have changed parts, and instead of being chased, we are chasing the Shenandoah and the Washington; for, as true as I am a loyal Confederate, there are those confounded Yankees straight before us."

"You are right, Captain; I recognize them now. Which course shall we take?"

"East-southeast, and be quick about it."

The Atlanta, instantly obeying her helm, resumed her course in the required direction; but this manœuvre occupied several moments, during which the enemy's ships had rapidly gained ground; they had also recognized the Atlanta, and, taking advantage of her mistake, hurried forward to stop her.

A cannon-ball soon fell hissing into the sea, within a few cables' length of the privateer. "The dance is beginning," said the captain cheerfully. "Come, boys, give them as good as they send."

The gunners immediately opened fire.

"Spread every rag of canvas, Evans. We must put our

best foot foremost now. And see that the engineers are wide awake."

At this moment a shell from one of the hostile ships exploded on the deck a few paces away from the captain, fortunately without wounding any one. "Nichols," cried Captain Green, "superintend the howitzers yourself. Such compliments must be duly returned."

Nichols, a very skilful gunner, stationed himself at one of the guns and sent a shot rolling over the forward deck of the Shenandoah. It was instantly returned by a shell which cut in halves a sailor standing close beside Daniel.

This looked serious; but the Atlanta, her masts bending under the weight of sail, and getting up all steam, recovered her rate of speed, for a moment retarded. Little by little, she gained ground on the foe, and by nightfall was out of reach. The captain then assembled the officers and held a council of war.

"Gentlemen," said he, "it is now very evident that the captains of the Shenandoah and the Washington are ordered to pursue us closely. Under these conditions, flight is impossible. Not that either of these vessels can compare with us in speed. The Shenandoah is a swift sailer; the other is a clumsy, heavy old mud-scow, dating back to the last century at least. But if we keep on running from the enemy, we shall only go round and round the world, and not do much harm to Yankee commerce.

Besides, if our coal gives out, we shall be blockaded like fools in some neutral port, where we shall remain prisoners until the end of the war: for I should scarcely care to risk a repetition of the trick which succeeded at Las Palmas. On the other hand, it would be sheer folly to contend with such superior numbers. However, we must shake off our enemies, or our cruiser is done for. What do you say, gentlemen?"

"We agree with you, Captain."

"Perhaps," said Evans, "we may manage to give them the slip, and get into waters where we can work peacefully for a while."

"I think not," replied the captain. "We have far too expert sailors to deal with — I know them — to hope to deceive them. However, I will try your plan. This very night we will change our course, and proceeding towards the southwest, we will double Kerguelen Land as swiftly as may be. But what shall we do if the Yankees follow on our tracks?"

"It is a puzzling case and requires reflection," said the mate.

"Well, gentlemen, let me tell you my plan: although none of us are bookworms, I am sure you all remember the battle between the Horatii and Curatii. You know that at one moment, the last of the Horatii found himself contending alone with the three Curatii; only, while they were wounded and worn out, he was untouched and per-

fectly fresh. What did he do? He feigned flight. The three brothers, rushing after him, divided their forces, and he, doubling in his tracks, easily killed them singly although he could never have conquered them all together. Do you see now what I want to do?"

"Yes, Captain," said all the officers.

"We will try to keep near the Shenandoah; we will lure her after us, and when she is alone, we will accept the challenge. With God's help we will triumph. As for the Washington, I defy her to catch us."

During the night the Atlanta, by the captain's orders, headed for the south, and continued on that course for two days. On the morning of the third day the man on the lookout spied land on the bow.

"It is Kerguelen Land," said the captain, "the last land which we shall find in this direction. Beyond this sterile rock, which is only inhabited by penguins, the ocean stretches, vast and solitary, to the eternal icebergs of the South Pole. I hope that we may not be obliged to remain in these waters long, for I know no part of the globe where storms are more frequent or more violent. But I fancy that your idea was correct, Evans, and that we have thrown the enemy off our track; for they have been looking for us two days already, and may be far away."

"A sail to the west-nor'west!" cried the man on the lookout.

The captain sprang to the bridge and scanned the horizon with his glass.

"My hopes were premature," he said, "it is the Shenandoah; but, as I supposed, she is alone. The Washington could not keep up with her. Evans, clear the decks for action. We must seize our opportunity and hasten to meet the enemy."

Upon the instant, the sound of the drum echoed throughout the ship. Every preparation was rapidly made, and the men hurried to their posts.

"Quartermaster, nail the Confederate flag to the main peak!" shouted the captain as he strode up and down the deck. "Lads," he said to the crew, "show that you are not mere wreckers. I trust every man to do his duty."

An hour after the two ships were at close quarters, and a terrific cannonading began. But the struggle was unequal. The Shenandoah, with her sixty guns, threatened to destroy the Atlanta, which had but a small battery. Captain Green at once perceived this; he accordingly determined to hurl his ship against her formidable opponent.

At the same instant the broad sails of the Washington rose above the horizon. The Yankee admiral, attracted by the sound of cannonading, had hastened to his companion's relief.

The corsair frigate had become badly injured. Water poured into her hold at several openings. Some of the crew were at once set to work at the pumps, and succeeded

in stopping the flood, thus permitting the calkers to fother the leaks.

During the battle the wind had risen; the sea became rougher and rougher. It was clear that a tempest was at hand. At a single glance, Captain Green measured the whole extent of the dangers that threatened him. He must escape, and at the same time save his ship, menaced by the cyclone. Mounting the bridge, he addressed the crew as follows: —

"My boys, a terrible enemy is about to fall upon us, while a tempest lowers overhead. I regret to require fresh exertions from you, but they must ensure our success. Let every man stand to his post, and not desert it until the Atlanta floats unrestrained upon a calm sea."

"We fear neither the Yankees nor the storm," replied the men. "Three cheers for the captain!"

While the gunners returned to their guns, the sailors ran up the rigging; and the Atlanta was soon covered with canvas and scudding before a furious gale. Her engine, crowding on all steam, so greatly increased her speed that it was evident that the enemy must be quickly left behind. Suddenly a fearful noise was heard in the hold, and shortly after the head engineer rushed upon deck with these terrible words: —

"The horizontal shaft is broken."

The horizontal shaft is the very soul of a screw engine; without it, the engine, with its furnaces, boilers and pistons,

is but a useless mass, only fit to throw overboard. It is a delicate and difficult operation to repair the huge steel beam, which is sometimes ninety feet long, and is seldom attempted even under favorable circumstances; but in the midst of an elemental storm, it was not even to be thought of. The Atlanta was now entirely dependent on her sails.

On hearing the fatal news, the captain could not repress a cry of horror, but his discouragement scarcely lasted a second. The storm was now so awful that, in ordinary circumstances, it would be the captain's duty to reef every sail: Captain Green, on the contrary, ordered his men to spread every rag of canvas.

Nevertheless, the Washington was gaining on them fast. She soon began to rain shot into the Atlanta, which responded vigorously, still continuing her flight.

Captain Green had now but one hope left, and that was to hold out until night, which was approaching rapidly. One hour more, and darkness would shield the Atlanta from the attack of her dreaded foe.

The storm had now reached its height, and it was at once an awful and a sublime spectacle to see how the crews of the vessels forgot the dangers which surrounded them, in their mutual hatred. The cannon, vomiting fire and flame, mingled their deep growls with the roar of the tempest, dealing death to the ships.

The Atlanta, weighed down by the water which filled her hold, scarcely floated above the billows. Her tall masts



"The Atlanta burst into a vast jet of flame." — Page 179.

had been carried away by the wind; her shrouds hung torn to ribbons. The waves washed the deck at every moment, and threatened to make it untenable.

The captain, covered with blood which gushed from a wound made by a bursting shell, was lashed to his post. The two brave cabin boys, Daniel and Penguin, had imitated his example. Fastened by ropes to the rounds of the ladder leading to the spar-deck, amidst a rain of shot and shell, they still transmitted the captain's orders to the gunners.

At last the sky, already overcast by the tempest, grew darker and darker. Night fell. To the Atlanta it meant safety.

The Washington, herself disabled, her masts sprung, and leaking at every seam, felt that her prey was slipping from her grasp. Making a final effort, she contrived to get abreast the Atlanta, and, with a last broadside, wrapped her in a cloud of smoke and flame.

It was too much for the poor frigate; a ball had pierced her heart. Quivering in every limb, she seemed about to sink, when a terrible shock upheaved her deck, and the Atlanta burst into a vast jet of flame as she went down.

The wind howled furiously, and the waves surged high as if to destroy their victims more completely, and soon nothing was left but a few shapeless fragments, floating amidst the foam.



"He gazed about him."

CHAPTER XV.

THE WRECK.

THE sun rose clear and glorious, over the vast Indian Ocean, whose waves, still agitated by the storm of the preceding night, tossed and heaved wildly. Nothing was to be seen upon the vast liquid expanse. The whirlpool had swallowed the prey tossed to it by the fratricidal rage of the combatants.

Clouds of sea-birds skimmed the crest of the waves, while albatrosses, the vultures of the ocean, circled high above. Their piercing eyes perceived the bodies of the victims, which a strong current had sucked away from shore, towards antipodal lands. The carrion birds made ready for a feast.

From time to time some fragment was washed to the top of a wave, some plank, mast, or sheathing. Then a

larger timber emerged, like a great raft. Had some of the castaways succeeded in collecting the jetsam and flotsam and escaped from the awful catastrophe? No, it was no raft; if the poor captain could speak, he would recognize the deck of the Atlanta. The terrible explosion carried away the whole forward part of the frigate; but the greater portion of the stern withstood it, and buoyed up, undoubtedly by one of the bulkheads, floated on the waves, swimming with the current.

This wreck would have sufficed to save at least half a dozen men. Several sailors still lay stretched upon it; but they were only corpses, bound fast to the deck. The albatrosses swooped downwards and feasted on their flesh.

There lay poor Captain Green, dead at his post. Perhaps he did not survive to witness the final catastrophe, for a large wound gaped in his breast.

Not far off were the two cabin boys. The unfortunate children, — Death took them unawares, but not so soon that they did not see the shadow of his wings. Still clasped in each other's arms, they seemed to have exchanged a last farewell on the threshold of eternity.

Poor Penguin, you have left the life which had so few charms for you! Poor Daniel, your spirit has flown to a land where there are no more dreams!

They looked as if sleeping, as they lay there together. The sun shone upon their pale brows, while the breeze fluttered their light curls.

A shadow passed rapidly over them. An albatross, already almost sated, had spied the young Canadian. It advanced cautiously and suspiciously; its sharp, crooked beak struck the bare shoulder, and a little stream of blood trickled from it. The arm moved convulsively, and the bird flew off in a fright.

Probably the roll of the sea had stirred the boy's body. But no: the head is lifted, the eyes open. Penguin looks up into the blue sky; scarcely restored to life, he wonders if he is at the bottom of the sea, and if it is not the azure waves that dance and shimmer over head.

At last, raising himself on his arm, he gazed about him. Was it a dream? He saw Daniel stretched beside him, and, a little farther off, the captain. He remembered all, — the fight, the explosion. How did he escape the general disaster? Why was not he dead like the rest? But perhaps those who lay stretched about him were saved, as he was. He might be able to rouse them from their slumbers, to recall them to life.

With feverish haste he loosed the cord which bound him and which had saved him from the devouring waves. He rose to his feet. At the sight, thousands of birds, hovering over the wreck, took to flight, uttering piercing cries, and, regretting their interrupted meal, circled restlessly above.

Penguin stood one moment in indecision between Daniel and Captain Green; but gratitude triumphed over friendship. With trembling steps he ran to the captain and



"The soul of the gallant sailor had escaped." — Page 185.

knelt beside him. Alas! all hope was vain. The soul of the gallant sailor had escaped through the gaping wound, and the cabin boy clasped in his arms nought but a lifeless body, already stiffened by death. The boy knelt silently, gazing into the kind and loyal face; he thought of all that he owed to this generous protector, who had never given him any but lessons of honesty and truth, who had taken the place of the father, removed from him by the hand of Providence. Once more he was alone in the world.

And Daniel! At this thought Penguin sprang to his feet and hastened towards his comrade. His body was cold, but bore no trace of any wound. The boy put his ear to the young Frenchman's breast; he fancied that he heard a faint throb. With an eager, trembling hand, he untied the ropes which bound his friend; he pressed him in his arms and warmed him as well as he could. Soon the lifeless body grew more supple; the lips opened, and a faint sigh escaped; the eyes opened, glazed and expressionless at first, but soon full of life.

"Martial!" murmured Daniel.

"Yes, it is I!" cried Penguin. "Wake up, we are saved."

"Saved? Oh! yes, I remember now. Was I wounded then?"

"No, indeed. You are safe and sound with me, your friend."

The young French boy looked about him. His comrade

had some difficulty in making him understand what had happened, — how, plunged to the bottom of the sea when the explosion occurred, they were brought to the surface again with the floating deck; how the ropes that fastened them had preserved them all night from the fury of the waves.

"Then we are alone, adrift in mid-ocean on this wreck?" asked Daniel.

"Alas, yes! All our companions are dead."

"And Captain Green?"

"He too. Look at him. Our first duty is to repeat a prayer over his body, and to entrust it to the sea, which shall be his tomb; for otherwise birds of prey would soon dispute with us for him."

The two boys turned towards their captain, and, kneeling beside him, uttered a prayer for him whom they loved and respected so deeply. Then they cast his body into the sea, and saw it vanish in the watery depths.

They were forced to perform the same melancholy task for those of the sailors who lay on the deck, principally gunners who had served at the guns until the last moment.

This pious duty done, the two lads cast a sad look into each other's eyes; then, moved by a similar emotion, they fell into one another's arms and burst into tears.

What was to become of them on this fragment of a ship, scarcely raised above the water? Might not the air-tight

compartment which buoyed them up, sink into the abyss in its turn, at any moment?

On this solitary sea, frequented only by occasional whalers, the poor castaways could not look for help. They were therefore condemned to die of starvation, for they had no food. The portion of the ship beneath their feet was filled with water, so that there was no hope there.

They did not speak, but each silently considered all the horrors of their situation.

"It would have been a hundred times better to have gone down with the Atlanta," said Daniel at last. "Death has only spared us to prolong our agony. What is the use of living, since we are condemned to die a wretched death of hunger and thirst?"

"Why despair?" replied Penguin. "He who saved us will yet come to our aid. Besides, you can always eat me."

"How can you have the heart to joke at such a time?" said Daniel reproachfully.

"It is always better to rise above adversity, and gayety is sometimes one of the best assistants. But I was not joking. You are stronger than I, you have therefore more chance of surviving. In that case, I don't see why you should not eat me, — it would not be the first time that a shipwrecked man has eaten his comrade, — unless you think me too thin!"

"Yes, that is so," said Daniel, who could not help laughing. "And as our regular meals don't seem likely to

fatten you, I think I should be more appetizing, and that you had better eat me." Then, quickly becoming serious again: "It does not seem to me right to jest at such a time. Do you know, I am dying of thirst; if I had something to drink, I believe that I could go several days without eating."

"There is no lack of water," said Penguin. "Unluckily, it is very salt. But let us try it; it may be better than none."

The boys rushed to the hatch, which, being open, formed a perfect well, filled with water to the level of the deck. They scooped up a little sea-water in their hands; but the salt dose only increased their thirst and made their lips smart sadly.

Despair was again about to take possession of them, when Penguin, leaning over the hole, fixed his eye upon something floating below.

"It seems to me," he said at last, "as if I saw something stirring down below."

A violent movement of the wreck brought the article close to the opening. Daniel uttered a cry of joy.

"It is a barrel!" he exclaimed.

After many fruitless efforts, they succeeded in getting hold of the barrel and hoisting it on deck. They started the bung. The little cask was full of brandy. They drank a mouthful, which did them a great deal of good.

"This barrel," said Penguin, "may be our salvation or

our ruin, according as we choose to use it. It is certain that the brandy which it contains, taken in small quantities, will quench our thirst and restore our strength. But if we find nothing else that is drinkable, and use this too frequently, it will deprive us of our reason and soon kill us. How unfortunate that we have no water!"

Daniel only listened with half an ear to his friend's wise reflection. He was gazing attentively into the gaping hole at their feet.

"Do you know what part of the vessel this hatchway opens into?" he finally asked.

"Of course; into the steward's pantry."

"Very well; in that case, we ought to find, not only water, but provisions there."

"Not the water that we want," said Penguin, "for the sea has made itself quite at home there."

"Yes, but don't you remember that the store-room opening out of the steward's pantry contained several hogsheads of fresh water, tightly closed? I have often noticed them, and the water taken from them for the officers' table was much better than that distilled by machinery."

"You are right; but how can we get at it?"

"We will soon see," said Daniel.

They both began to walk the deck as if they expected to find some solution of the puzzle in this way.

Suddenly Penguin stopped at the stern, and closely

examined a leaden plate imbedded in the deck, just under the steering wheel.

"I have hit it," he said, after a few moments' hesitation. "Have you your knife?"

"Yes; it was fastened to my belt."

"Good! I have mine too. They will answer to dig away this plate, and cut it into pieces."

"What for?" said Daniel in surprise.

"I will tell you. To get into the steward's pantry, we must dive into the water that fills the space between decks. That is easy enough, but neither of us is a sufficiently skilful swimmer to hold himself at the bottom of the water while he works. So this is what we must do: We will cut this lead plate into two pieces and make two rolls of it. I will fasten one of them to each foot, and that will keep me down without any trouble."

"But you will be drowned," cried Daniel.

"Wait a bit. We will fasten a strip of wood, torn from the bulwarks, across the hatchway; to this strip we will tie a strong rope, — there are plenty of them about the deck, — and I will tie this rope under my arms. I will let myself drop into the water, and you can pull me up when I am ready."

"How shall I know when to pull?"

"Well, I will fasten a string to my arm, and you must twist the other end round your wrist. When I want to come up, I will pull the string, just as rich ladies do when they want their coachman to stop."

"Oh, how clever you are, my dear Martial!" exclaimed Daniel. "I could never have arranged it all so well."

The two boys instantly set to work to carry out their scheme. They dug away the piece of lead with their knives; wrenched off a strip of wood, to which they tied a rope; then, following out his programme exactly, the brave Canadian, with his friend's help, dropped into the water. It was with great distress that Daniel saw him disappear. A few moments after, feeling a twitch at the string fastened to his wrist, he hauled stoutly, saw Penguin appear, and dragged him upon deck.

"It is suffocating down there," said he. "It took me a long while to find the door of the pantry, but I know now where it is. Let me rest a moment, and I will dive again. The key is in the door."

After taking breath he plunged back through the hatchway, and was again drawn up a few minutes later by Daniel.

"I have opened the door," said he. "It was all that I was able to do, and, indeed, I greatly feared I should not manage it. The water kept it so tightly closed that, even when the key was turned, the door would not stir. At last, putting my shoulder to the door, I forced it open."

"I will take your place now," said Daniel. "You will be perfectly exhausted, and then you won't be able to stay under water long enough to accomplish anything."

"No, no," was the quick response, "I will make one more descent; then it will be your turn."

And, without further delay, he dived anew.

A few moments later he reappeared, triumphant.

"I 've got something," he shouted.

This something proved to be a ham, carefully wrapped in tinfoil. The salt water had not hurt it in the least, and our two friends instantly made a valiant attack upon the dainty food. A swallow of brandy completed the repast, which seemed to them delicious.

"Now you see," said Penguin, "that you should never doubt Providence. I think that God is too good to have snatched us from the clutch of death, merely to prolong our agony."

Daniel, fastening the weights to his feet, and the rope round his waist, made three submarine journeys to the store-room, and brought up several precious articles, — a box of sardines, another ham, and a bottle of wine. They at once knocked off the neck of the latter, and drank to the memory of Captain Green.

Then, having carefully stored their provisions on deck, so that the roll of the sea should not throw them into the water, the two friends lay down side by side, and fell asleep beneath the radiant light of the stars, but not without renewed thanks to the hand which had so manifestly protected them.



"The barrel was hoisted to the deck."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END OF THE ATLANTA.

THE night was calm and the young castaways did not wake until the first rays of the sun touched their eyes. Sleep had restored their strength. They felt fresh and well; so, after a warm embrace, they immediately resumed the work of the previous day.

Each dived into the hold in turn, and they had soon accumulated a considerable quantity of provisions on deck.

"We have enough food for a fortnight," said Penguin,

"and if we continue to float with the current, we must finally strike land. We shall certainly be saved."

"God grant that it may be soon! for the first tempest would destroy us," replied Daniel. "Our raft floats too low to resist very strong breakers. Where do you suppose that we shall land?"

"I scarcely know. I think the current flows easterly or northeasterly, but I have no idea where we were when the Atlanta blew up; and yet I seem to remember that the last observation was taken to the northeast of Kerguelen Land. I also heard Mr. Evans say that if we escaped from the Yankees, we would steer for Sumatra. If we had a map, although I am not much of a sailor, I might be able to find out which way we are going. At any rate, we are in God's keeping."

"Yes," said Daniel, "that is our only hope. We shall probably sight land before long. See how strong the current is. The fragments of the wreck, floating about us, spin round as if they were in a whirlpool."

"There are currents in the sea which move as swiftly as any river," returned the Canadian. "If you had made a voyage on the Atlantic coast of the United States, as I have, you would know that. The captain often showed me the great Gulf Stream, which is a regular river, rising in the Gulf of Mexico, and traversing the ocean, without ever mingling its waters with it. It is always warm in the midst of the icy sea."

Although food was now plenty, they had not a drop of drinking water. They had, indeed, extracted several bottles of wine from the pantry, but they greatly preferred water, and bent all their efforts to getting out one of the casks stored below. This was no easy task, for it cost them several days of hard work. With an axe which he found in the pantry, Penguin first managed to stave in the door of the store-room, which was swollen by the water; then diving in turn, the two boys succeeded in rolling the heavy hogshead over the floor until it was just under the hatch. This result was achieved with so much effort that they postponed the rest of the performance until next day.

It proved to be a mere trifle, however. Ropes were fastened round the barrel, and it was hoisted to the deck, where its appearance was hailed with a shout of joy. Armed with their knives, they hastily started the bung, and swallowed a mouthful of the longed-for liquid. Alas! the water was thoroughly brackish: the sea-water had entered the pores of the wood and mixed with the contents.

"What a shame!" cried Daniel, spitting it out with disgust. "Fancy! we have wasted five days in getting at that confounded cask, which is only fit to be thrown overboard."

"Never mind!" said the philosophical Penguin. "We can drink wine, and it won't kill us. How many people there are who grumble because they are obliged to drink

water! And then this cask has been of some service, for at least it has taken up our time, which would have hung very heavily on our hands if we had had nothing to do."

"Oh, I know that you are always contented. I never saw such a fellow," said the French boy.

"What 's the use of complaining about a thing that can't be helped? The worst of the matter is, that when I went down this morning to arrange the ropes around the barrel, I noticed that there were only two bottles of wine left. That makes eight bottles in all, with the six that we have up here. Luckily, we have still plenty of brandy, and an abundant supply of provisions."

Still, that very day, on taking a trip below, Daniel could only find one unopened box of canned meat. It soon became clear that the rest of the food was injured by salt water. They were accordingly forced to put themselves on rations. Penguin decided that they could not afford more than two scant meals a day, washed down by half a glass of wine.

The wreck still advanced quite regularly. After drifting towards the east, it took a southeasterly course, which somewhat alarmed the castaways, who feared lest they should be carried towards the frozen regions of the South Pole. Two or three times, too, the floating deck, seized by contrary currents, spun about as if it would instantly be sucked into the abyss. In short, it was very evident that their temporary shelter could not resist the shock of the

waves much longer. Portions were washed away every day, and the main body, immersed in the water, was rapidly breaking up.

"I really don't understand how it is that we have kept afloat so long," said Penguin one day. "It seems to me as if our raft were far too heavy to swim so persistently."

"I am surprised at it myself," replied Daniel. "And yet I once heard the captain say that if the Atlanta were cut in halves, the separate pieces would be perfectly seaworthy. He explained that besides the air-tight compartments into which the hold was divided, the frigate had also iron partitions, into which, in case of danger, air could be pumped by the engine, so as to keep the ship afloat, even if it were full of water."

"Undoubtedly that is it," concluded the Canadian. "Just before the battle the captain must have had these partitions filled; and we owe our safety to the fact that the explosion spared those situated in this part of the vessel."

Now that the castaways had no longer the resource of submarine journeys into the store-room, their days seemed endless. Their faith began to waver, and they lived in constant dread of approaching evil. If land were not near at hand and if the weather turned bad, they must inevitably perish.

In vain they scanned the horizon until the last ray of

daylight vanished, hoping to catch a glimpse of the longed-for shore. Night fell, and their position was unchanged, and they sadly lay down to sleep on the deck.

For three weeks they were thus tossed at the mercy of the waves. They had but a few swallows of wine left. Soon nothing would remain for them but to die, — to die a horrible, a fearful death, coming upon them by slow degrees, when hunger and thirst should have deprived them both of all power of resistance, either bodily or mental. Daniel already gave himself up to despair; Penguin, more inured to suffering, was determined to struggle manfully to the last.

One day, as they were mournfully eating one of their last meals, a very meagre repast, composed of a bit of cracker and a morsel of bacon, they saw a flock of small birds flying northwards over their heads, and this sight increased their melancholy, for these birds were probably flying towards land, and consequently the wreck was moving steadily away from it.

A few hours after, the castaways had a moment of intense excitement. A dim shadow suddenly appeared before them to the southeast, — land, then, lay in that direction, straight before them. But soon the shadow grew more distinct, rose higher, and proved to be a heavy bank of clouds, which rapidly overspread the sky. It was not land, and a storm was at hand.

The wind began to howl, the waves heaved and tossed,

and a torrent of rain, accompanied with claps of thunder, announced the approach of a hurricane.

Whirling on its own axis, plunging into the trough of the waves to reappear upon the topmost crest, the wreck was flung hither and thither by the furious sea. Clinging to the bulwarks, the poor boys huddled together, expecting every moment to be their last.

Night came, dark and gloomy, adding to the horror of their situation.

Suddenly the wreck seemed to receive a yet more fearful shock than any previous one; a dull, cracking sound was heard, the deck split open beneath their feet, the waves overwhelmed the wretched castaways, who, expecting to go down, exchanged a tender farewell.

But no, their hour had not come. The gulf refused its prey, now held fast and motionless by a mysterious force.

"We are on shore!" cried Penguin.

But a livid flash of lightning, illuminating the darkness, revealed nought save the vast and implacable sea stretching on every hand.

The billows now madly attacked the wreck, which had probably struck on some unseen rock. Unable to swallow it whole, they strove to devour it piecemeal, tearing large fragments from it at every onslaught. The poor boys clung to it with the utmost difficulty, being almost constantly under water, and deafened with the roar of the surf.

At last, after an apparently endless night, during which the wretched lads experienced all the agonies of death a hundred times over, the sky grew brighter, the storm died away with a low growl, driven thence by the victorious sun, whose rays restored some hope to the breasts of the castaways. Both uttered a shout of joy. A mile to the northward lay a bare and rocky coast, bathed in sunlight. The wreck had been washed upon a coral reef which bordered the shore. While the sea was still lashed to a fury outside, beyond this natural dyke it lay calm and peaceful.

"We are saved!" cried Penguin, clasping Daniel in his arms.

"Land!" exclaimed Daniel. "I never saw anything so lovely!"

"I don't know about that," replied the Canadian; "but we must get off this ugly reef, which stopped our progress, as fast as we can. How are we going to reach shore?"

"By swimming."

"It 's a long way off."

"Oh! I have often swum quite as far."

"Yes," said Penguin; "but we have been living on short rations for several days, and we may not be able to hold out."

"Necessity will double our strength."

"I am not so sure of that. But at any rate, I have a suggestion to make, which may help us out of the difficulty.

You know our beloved cask, which we had such trouble to hoist out of the store-room?"

"Yes," said Daniel, "it is still here. The storm did not succeed in loosing the ropes with which we bound it to the bulwarks."

"That is very fortunate, as it contains all our tools and the few provisions left to us. Moreover, I intend that it shall serve to carry us to land. We will put our clothes into it, as we can swim better without them. Then we will push it along in front of us, and from time to time, we can catch hold and rest against it."

This plan was approved and quickly carried out. The boys took off their clothes and stowed them away in the empty cask, with their scanty stock of food, their tools, and all the ropes which they could collect; then, carefully rolling it overboard, they plunged in after it. A few strokes took them off the reef, and soon the two swimmers were in smooth water, pushing the cask before them. Penguin's plan proved excellent, for after quarter of an hour's progress, they were forced to seek help of their impromptu buoy, thanks to which they reached land uninjured.

The first thing that they did on setting foot on solid earth was to exchange a long, silent embrace. Then, falling on their knees, they thanked Him who had kept up their courage through so many trials and who had rescued them from the waves in so providential a way.

When they rose, their eyes turned to the deck of the Atlanta, which, stranded on the reef, still reared its black hulk aloft, as if waiting their farewell.

While Penguin stood motionless and mute, gazing fixedly at the wreck, a wave swept away the last fragment. He heaved a sigh, and then, turning to Daniel, said: "All is over now. You are all that is left to me on earth!"



"Daniel returned with a splendid cockatoo."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DESERT ISLAND.

ANY other than a castaway must have felt a bitter pang at sight of the desolate, barren shore upon which the storm had washed the fragments of the Atlanta. A narrow strip of beach, sprinkled with a few sickly thorn-bushes, divided the sea from the black cliffs, calcined by a tropical sun, and forming a bare, jagged ridge. The tide, as it went down, left occasional pools of water filled with blood-red seaweed, adding by their sanguine hue to the loathsome character of this corner of the globe. No bird was to be seen, nor any living creature, in this awful solitude.

However, when the two boys, having seen the last fragment of their raft go down, turned and looked about them, their hearts throbbed with joy, and filled with gratitude to their invisible Protector. To them, lost for days out on

the vast ocean with the constant prospect of death before them, these naked rocks, these scrubby shrubs, and these cliffs seemed wrapped in a marvellous beauty. Their feet clung with delight to the earth which they had never expected to tread again. They eagerly inhaled the scorching air, which seemed to them a hundred times more delicious than the fresh sea-breeze. They sat thus side by side on the beach, worn out with fatigue and excitement, and overcome with the bliss of their preservation.

Daniel was the first to shake off this torpor.

"I should like to know where fate has thrown us," said he after a prolonged silence.

"Time will tell us," answered Penguin, still deep in thought.

"Is this land inhabited?" continued the young Frenchman. "I see nothing around us to prove it."

"What does it matter?" was the Canadian's philosophical reply. "The most important thing is that we are on shore. Now that we are well rested, we will take our breakfast if you like. The store-closet is not far off, and we sha'n't have much trouble in emptying it."

The cask, which they had drawn high up on the beach, only contained a few biscuit and a little salt meat. A small remnant of brandy also remained in the bottom of the keg.

The boys set out in search of fresh water, of which they had been so long deprived; but in spite of all their

patient scrutiny they could find no spring. They were accordingly obliged to satisfy themselves with washing down their meagre meal with a swallow of brandy.

Then they divided the biscuits that were left, took up their ropes and tools — a hatchet and cutlass — and prepared to travel farther.

"What shall we do?'" asked Daniel. "Shall we climb the cliffs or shall we follow the coast-line?"

"I think we should do well to keep close to the shore," said Penguin. "It is probable that the storm has cast us upon one of the many islands in the Indian Ocean. Now, if we are to meet with Europeans, it will be upon the sea-coast, for all their settlements are so situated."

"Very well," answered Daniel; "but in what direction shall we go?"

"Let me see, where is the sun?"

"It will set over yonder, behind us."

"Then let us follow its course," said Penguin; "in that way we shall see it a little longer."

They accordingly proceeded westward.

For the first few hours they advanced but slowly, meeting with many obstacles. The rising tide now covered the beach, forcing them to walk among a confused mass of rocks and stones, which formed the base of the steep line of cliffs. These stones, covered with sea-mosses and tiny shells, were very slippery, and the boys often had to climb some distance up to avoid deep pools of water thick with seaweed.

Finally, after much exertion, they reached a point beyond which an arm of the sea ran up inland. The mountains stood a little farther back from the shore, leaving a superb sandy beach, upon which it was a pleasure to run barefooted.

But the brave boys could not repress an exclamation of disappointment. Their eyes, taking in the crescent-shaped bay at a glance, showed them nothing but a waste of sand running to the very foot of the mountains, without a tree or even a bush to break the awful monotony.

"I should think we were at Cape Bojador," said Penguin.

"Yes," said Daniel, "Sand, sand, nothing but sand. Perhaps we have come in the wrong direction."

"Even if we have, we cannot retrace our steps. My feet are bleeding, and I am quite unable to repeat the gymnastic feats which brought us here, at present. If we walk briskly we shall reach the opposite end of the bay before night. Perhaps we may find a more hospitable region beyond."

Just at this moment, Daniel, who had paused, gave two or three leaps, at if he had suddenly gone mad. Penguin was amazed to see him kneel on the sand, then jump up, crying:—

"Water! water!"

In a second the Canadian had followed the example of his companion, who, flat on the ground, had plunged his face into a rippling brook.

Water! All their fears, all their troubles, were forgotten. The two boys eagerly drank the delicious beverage. They lapped it up greedily; bathed their faces, their heads and hands in it. Never in their lives had they tasted anything so cool and clear.

They were loath to tear themselves away from this tiny streamlet, which, trickling through the sand, ran into the sea close by. They felt that water was so rare, so precious a thing, that they might find none elsewhere. A mere trifle would have decided them to spend the whole day by the rivulet. Very fortunately, Penguin had put one of the empty wine-bottles into his pocket. He filled it with water; but this was but a scanty supply, and he regretted that he had not brought along the little cask, which had been left behind as too heavy.

A little farther on the travellers made another delightful discovery, — that of some very savory shell-fish, something like oysters, which furnished them with an excellent meal.

Comforted and revived by these two events, they walked bravely on until evening. The sun was just sinking in the sea when they rounded the end of the bay. The sandy shore turned sharply to the north for a short distance, and the ocean stretched before them in every other direction.

At this sight, the poor, discouraged boys dropped heavily upon the sandy ground.

"We are on a desert rock," cried Daniel.

"I fear we are," muttered Penguin.

"What will become of us?"

"Let us travel round the island," said the Canadian. "The other side may offer greater resources. At any rate, the brook-water and the shell-fish will enable us to await the coming of some passing ship which will pick us up."

It was a very feeble hope. The poor cabin boys fell asleep with melancholy spirits.

Yet it would have taken them many a long day to walk round the island upon which fate had placed them; for this island, the largest in the world, a continent in itself, was Australia.

The floating fragment of the Atlanta was seized in the forty-fifth degree of latitude south, between Kerguelen Land and St. Paul, by the great South Australian current, which, travelling rapidly eastward, after dividing into two branches, passes to the south of Australia and washes the western shores of New Zealand. To the latter country, therefore, the deck of the Atlanta would have been borne if it had not been for the timely help of the storm. In that case the wretched castaways must inevitably have died of starvation; for the current slackens its pace in the last half of its journey, and their involuntary voyage would have lasted three weeks longer. Very fortunately, when the hurricane burst, the wreck, sucked out of the current by the force of the wind blowing from the south, was driven towards the Australian coast, and, as we have



"Huge trees, with silvery branches, stood on every hand." — Page 211.

seen, was thrown upon the reefs of Cape Nelson, near the boundary lines of Victoria.

Daniel little guessed that the night, on which he fell asleep a prey to such gloomy forebodings, was his first night upon Australian soil, the land of his dreams, the end and aim of his ambition. Providence had led him, with a rough hand it may be, to the desired goal; but many days must yet elapse before he learned the favor which had been granted him.

At day-dawn the boys resumed their journey. They walked slowly on for a whole week, with ever-increasing discouragement, along the barren, sandy shore, where they found no food but shell-fish and a little water.

The length of the distance which they had traversed led them to hope that they might meet with human beings. They now knew that they were journeying through a great country, — if an island, a very large one, — which could not possibly be uninhabited. This idea gave them fresh courage and strength.

However, energetic as they were, they felt that they could not go on much longer. Had they escaped from the vast ocean only to perish in the immense solitudes of the desert?

Their joy may therefore be easily imagined when one evening, on turning a corner, they suddenly found themselves at the head of a smiling valley, filled with a rank, luxuriant vegetation. Huge trees, with silvery branches,

stood on every hand, growing high above a delightful undergrowth of dwarf acacias and splendid tree-ferns, with mossy trunks and soft, waving plumes. A pretty river ran noisily through the valley and bounding over the rocks on the shore, mingled its clear waters with the waves of the sea. Night was approaching, and quantities of birds were flying about, seeking shelter. Snowy cockatoos, red-headed parroquets, and party-colored parrots filled the air with their brilliant hues and their deafening clamor.

"By St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of Canada!" enthusiastically exclaimed Penguin, "this is, indeed, a paradise."

"Yes," said Daniel, gazing about him with wonder and admiration, "as truly as the region we have just left was a perfect hell."

"God has led us hither," continued the Canadian. "I was utterly exhausted, and if the desert had lasted much longer, I really believe I should have died of fatigue. These beautiful trees must have fruit on them, but it is too late for us to look. We shall see to-morrow."

After a good night's rest on a soft bed of fern-leaves the two friends set about examining the trees; but to their great disappointment, they found that none of them bore fruit. Had they been botanists, they would have known that the splendid trees all about them belonged to the great family of the Eucalyptus, none of which bear

edible fruit, or to that of the ferns, which have neither fruit nor flowers.

It is certainly very hard to die of hunger in the midst of a desert; but in a paradise, such a thing is not to be thought of for an instant.

However, after a minute exploration of the neighborhood, our travellers were convinced that there was no vegetable food to be found, and were very glad to return to the beach and breakfast on shell-fish once more.

They then decided to ford the river and push farther westward. The crossing of the little stream afforded them a good bath, but once on the other side, they saw with regret that the soil speedily resumed its barren, sandy character, which continued as far as the eye could reach.

Their hesitation was great; but they could not make up their minds to leave the valley for the desert. Penguin, particularly, preferred the shade of the trees to the scorching heat of the beach.

"I have an idea," he said to Daniel. "These trees are full of birds. Why should n't we try to catch a few of them?"

"How?"

"By throwing stones at them. With patience, we must certainly get at least one."

"I have a better plan," said Daniel. "When I was a child at home, and played truant, — which, I regret to say, was not seldom, — I spent my time in setting traps for

birds. I could easily weave some snares from these vines; but it would take time. I was also quite skilful in handling a sling. I will make one; we have plenty of rope, and stones as well. This will be a more speedy mode of procedure, and will give us something to eat at once."

"Very well, make haste," replied Penguin; "and while you are hunting, I will get the kitchen ready."

"The kitchen?"

"Yes, I will kindle the fire, and I —"

"The fire? What are you going to light it with?"

"Nothing easier with this in hand," said the Canadian, drawing from his pocket a knife and a sharp flint-stone. "I lay a bit of my shirt on this pebble, which I picked up the other day, and I strike a light. What is there extraordinary in that? My fire once lighted, I will heat the water —"

"What are you going to heat it in?" asked Daniel, with great surprise.

"It is very evident, my dear fellow, that you did well to appoint yourself hunter to the party, for you know nothing about housekeeping. I am an old woodsman, and never would allow myself to be put out by such a trifle. You shall see how I make our kettle; for a kettle we must have. Look at that great tree, with white bark like a birch; that shall furnish us with what we want."

He went up to a tall gum-tree and made two vertical incisions in the trunk with his axe, then two horizontal

cuts united them; he thus peeled off a large, oblong piece of bark, without any trouble. Bending the sides together, he quickly fashioned a sort of cylindrical vase, and pinned it together with acacia thorns.

"Your kettle won't hold water, and it will burn," remarked Daniel.

"Wait a bit."

And Penguin, carrying his bark kettle, went down to the river, and walked a short distance down the bank. Then, doubtless finding what he wanted, he stooped, picked up two or three handfuls of brownish earth, which he moistened slightly with water. He kneaded the mixture a little and carefully plastered the outside of his pot with it, covering it with a regular layer about a finger thick.

"There," said he, "there is your kettle. It is light, convenient, and not expensive. Now, while I light the fire, do you go in search of game."

Daniel started out, but his first attempts were fruitless. His hand had lost its cunning; the trees were very tall; but at last, after an hour's chase, he returned to the rendezvous with a splendid cockatoo.

As Penguin had promised, the fire burned briskly and the water was boiling in the pot, the clay that covered it having turned to a fine brick-red on exposure to the flames. In the twinkling of an eye the bird was plucked, dressed, and plunged into the boiling water.

"This is much better than roasting it," sententiously observed the impromptu cook, "and won't harm your game, which looked to me rather aged. It will give us both soup and beef. But watch the pot. I forgot to provide plates."

These were fashioned as easily as the kettle had been, and having been submitted to the action of fire, would have done honor to an antique potter.

Daniel was as touched by his comrade's unalterable good humor as he was deeply struck by his quick intellect and his sprightly temper.

"What would have become of me without you, dear Martial?" said he.

"We each need the other," answered Penguin, "but just now we must pay attention to our dinner; the soup is ready."

How delicious this substantial, hot meal seemed to the castaways, so long deprived of solid food! After devouring the soup, they feasted on the boiled flesh of the old cockatoo, which they washed down with copious draughts of fresh water.

"If we only had some bread, or even some hard tack," said Daniel enthusiastically, "I think I might call this the best dinner I ever ate in my life."

"So should I," said Penguin. "I had no idea that those chattering old parrots had such a delicate flavor; and as there are plenty of them all about us, we are secure against

famine for a long time to come. If we really are on a desert island, we will do as Robinson Crusoe did; we will build a house, and live happily in this solitude."

"We could make ourselves happy for some years," said Daniel, "but in the long run I fancy we should tire of it; so it will be wise, if we build a house, to put it up near the beach, so that we can see any ship that passes, and signal her if need be."

"Our best course for the present," responded the Canadian, "is to explore the interior of the country, or at any rate to see what resources the valley has to offer. This valley may lead to some rising ground, from which we can grasp the whole island at a glance. We can choose the best situation for a settlement at our leisure."

"But we are very well off here," observed Daniel.

"Yes, and we will come back here if we do not find a better location. Besides, we run no risk of getting lost; this river will guide us. We will follow it to its source, and if our exploration is in vain we can return here."

This plan being adopted, the boys spent the rest of the day in preparations for the trip. Penguin, still playing the part of housekeeper, skilfully converted their broad red woollen sashes into two bags for their kitchen utensils, and the provisions to be collected later on. The seams, which were run up with twine, were strong if not elegant.

Meantime, Daniel set about securing supplies for the larder. Armed with his sling, he lurked among the trees

on the watch for some unwary bird. His stones constantly missed their mark, and he was beginning to feel discouraged, when he thought of substituting balls of clay baked in the fire, for pebbles. These formed hard, round missiles which whistled through the air like bullets. At the very first trial he had the satisfaction of seeing a magnificent bird fall at his feet. After some consideration, he concluded that it was a pigeon, although its bluish-green plumage was quite unlike that of its European cousins, and it was also much larger. It was a fine specimen of the Molucca pigeon, a bird of great beauty and delicate flavor.

Another attempt brought down a large gray parrot; and the young hunter, satisfied with his luck, returned to camp.

The Canadian sat by the fire, busy with his sewing. By his side was a kettle full of water, boiling briskly over the flames.

"I have brought you something to put into the pot," cried Daniel, showing him his fine birds; "but what are you cooking now?"

"I am boiling salt water," quietly replied Penguin.

"What for?"

"Did you think the soup was good this morning?"

"Yes," said Daniel, "excellent."

"Well, that was because I took care to put a little salt water into my broth, but only a very little, for it is a thing which must not be abused. But if we go through the

valley to-morrow, we shall have none to use. Then how are we going to flavor our soup?"

"True, I never thought of that."

"The water which I am boiling will provide us with a good supply of salt, and we can not only season our soup, but salt our meat."

In fact, as the liquid evaporated, it deposited a layer of grayish crystals on the sides of the pot. Penguin, who was watching the operation, added salt water from time to time, to increase the crystalline deposit. When evening came the boys had gathered several pounds of nice salt in this way. It was dry and sparkling, and was instantly stored away in a dainty box made of eucalyptus bark by the ingenious Canadian.

With what supreme satisfaction the wanderers lay down to rest on their fern beds that night! The results obtained in this one day had opened up a future full of promise. Thanks to their united efforts and their industry, they now felt that they might be thoroughly happy, even if fate condemned them to a prolonged exile in this desert region.



"The mountain-pass came to a sudden end."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE VALLEY OF THE GLENELG.

NEXT morning, loaded with their light baggage, the two travellers started on their journey.

The valley narrowed to the east and was traversed by the river, which wound capriciously as it went, and leaped gayly over white stones, beneath a close canopy of verdure.

It was really an enchanting scene. Superb groups of tree-ferns formed masses of dark green at the foot of giant eucalyptus trees, whose silvery tops seemed lost in the

cloudless azure sky; and through this verdant curtain came occasional glimpses of hills covered with acacias, casuarinas, and a hundred other flowering shrubs. Who would suppose that these magnificent floral adornments concealed the burning desert, where our wanderers had feared they should die of hunger and fatigue? No part of the world presents such sudden and intense contrasts as Australia. The gloomy, vast, and awful desert constantly gives unexpected place to a smiling oasis, or a fresh valley, whose beauty is merely due to some spring or river which fertilizes the virgin soil.

The two friends walked slowly on through this Eden. There was no haste; time was nothing to them. As they went along they admired the beautiful birds fluttering over-head.

No country on earth can rival Australia in the beauty of its birds. It is the home of the bird of paradise, the "diamond of the animal kingdom." There, amid an incomparable collection of cockatoos, parrots, and parroquets, we find the elegant lyre-bird, Wilson's blackbird (a very rare species), and a hundred varieties of ringdoves, orioles, and bright-hued pigeons.

Now and then Daniel brought down one of these gay denizens of the woods with his sling. Penguin looked for fruit, only finding a few sour berries; or carved a spoon from a bit of gum-tree, working as he walked. Then, their day's journey done, the friends sat down beneath some

hoary tree to rest. Soon the fire burned briskly, the kettle was filled with water from the river, and their supper was cooked amid laughter and jests.

Yes, laughter! for it was a peaceful, happy life, which made the exiles forget all the bitterness of the past. Were they not at that charming age when every novelty distracts and lulls grief; when the mind, in its youthful freshness, chases away tears still wet on the cheek, with a hearty laugh; when a boy's courage is still undaunted, and goes straight forward to meet obstacles which will overwhelm it later on, after long years of struggle and failure?

Many days passed thus, and the lads thought that they must be near their journey's end. The valley narrowed rapidly, the hills hung closer over the river, which did not, however, show any sign of diminution.

This latter fact did not escape the observant eye of Penguin. He could not help expressing his surprise when, on reaching the end of the valley, he saw the rapid river pouring in foaming cascades from a narrow mountain gorge.

"I should have thought," said he, "that we must have reached the source of the river. The valley evidently comes to an end here, and yet the torrent, falling from the top of that rocky wall, pours down almost as great a volume of water as it does where it enters the sea. It must therefore come from a distance, probably from the plain above."

"Perhaps so," said Daniel; "but see how wild and barren those mountains look. I don't see a single tree. We

were wrong to come this way; we shall find nothing beyond but a stony waste, such as we passed through on our first day's journey."



"The rapid river pouring in foaming cascades from a narrow mountain gorge."

"I don't think so," replied the Canadian. "A region that sends down so much water to the sea cannot be sterile. It must have plenty of springs, and consequently, in such a climate, trees and vegetation. Let us keep on; we will not go too far to prevent our return to our charming valley."

The narrow pass through which the river wound before it fell in cascades to the vale below was anything but inviting. It was a mass of gray, slippery rocks, among which grew tall thorn-bushes.

When the floods were out, the torrent must fill it and convert it into a terrible whirlpool. The very banks were overgrown with long, loose briers, which in places reached from shore to shore and quite concealed the stream.

The sun turned this gorge into a perfect furnace; our travellers accordingly pushed forward, wishing to get out of it as quickly as possible. After two hours' walk they still saw no signs of open country. They would undoubtedly have given way to discouragement if Daniel had not suddenly changed the current of their thoughts by shouting: "An ostrich!"

"An ostrich!" repeated Penguin.

And both boys started on a run in pursuit of a superb emeu, which fled from them with tremendous strides. Two or three times Daniel took aim at it with his sling; but his missiles fell short or had no effect on so big and strong

a creature. Finally the emeu gained the advantage and soon disappeared round a turn in the ravine.

The two lads, convinced that their efforts were vain, fell breathlessly upon a rock. The sight of the big bird had greatly amazed them. Neither of them was enough of a zoölogist to know the Australian emeu, which, smaller than the African ostrich, differs from it in its gray feathers, and lack of plumes on tail and wings.

"An ostrich!" said Penguin at last, in a dreamy tone. "In what country can we be then?"

"That is what I was thinking, too," said Daniel. "I thought that ostriches only grew in Africa."

"But we cannot possibly be in Africa."

"Then where are we?"

"There is one thing certain," continued Penguin, "and that is that this bird is greatly sought for on account of its feathers, and it is also very rare. Therefore if our island contains ostriches, hunters must come here sometimes to catch them; so we had better follow the road which the ostrich took. By keeping in the neighborhood of these birds we shall have a chance of escape some day or other. At any rate, let us hurry out of this oven, where I am actually baking."

In a few paces they gained the rock behind which the emeu had disappeared, and could not restrain an exclamation of admiration at the spectacle which lay before them.

The mountain-pass, coming to a sudden end, gave place to a vast circular space surrounded by hills covered with scanty shrubs. But the plain itself, the basin, was carpeted with emerald-green grass, through which the river flowed, meandering gracefully hither and thither. Splendid trees, standing alone or in picturesque groups, cast a shadow on the verdant lawn, and gave it the look of a great park. To add to the general effect of the picture, a number of animals, which our travellers at first took for deer, were quietly cropping the turf amid various family parties of emeus.

"If I only saw a fence here and there," said Penguin, "I should be willing to swear that we were near Montreal, in Canada, in one of the fine parks just outside the city. Was n't I right when I told you that this stream would lead us to a fertile region? This is much better than our valley, and if we only had a gun, yonder herd of deer would provide us with food for the rest of our days."

"Do you think they are deer?" asked Daniel. "They look to me very small."

"It may be a species peculiar to this country," said the Canadian. "Let us approach them softly and see what they are."

Leaving the gorge, the boys proceeded cautiously towards a group of trees near which some of the animals were browsing. One was only a few steps away from the tree

behind which the youngsters hid, and they examined him at their leisure.

Penguin could not help muttering, at the first glance, "What a queer beast!"



"It was indeed a singular creature."

It was indeed a singular creature. It was larger than a deer; its posture made it look like a gigantic hare; its long hind legs were bent under it, and it rested, as it browsed, upon short, thin arms, finished off with a kind of

hand, which it occasionally used to stuff its food into its mouth, like a squirrel.

Daniel making a slight involuntary movement, the animal seemed to take the alarm. It rose suddenly on its hind-quarters, balancing its body with its tail, which gave it the effect of sitting on a tripod. Then it uttered a piercing cry.

At this call three little ones, which the wanderers had not noticed before, bounded up to their mother, who, taking them in her hands or fore-paws, stuffed them one after the other into a sort of open pouch hanging from her breast, where the babies snuggled away, leaving only their heads exposed, as if looking over the edge of a balcony.

This was too much for our young friends, who could not repress a simultaneous cry of surprise. The terrified beast instantly rose to her full height and fled with long leaps, carrying her family with her.

Daniel and Penguin looked at each other in utter amazement. Had fortune stranded them on one of the mysterious islands of the Thousand and One Nights? Neither of them had ever heard of such an animal; and they asked each other if what they had seen were not some passing hallucination, or the phantom of a dream.

And yet it was only a kangaroo that caused all their wonder. The poor Canadian had never heard of such a creature; but if Daniel, instead of playing truant, had studied his lessons more sedulously, he would not only

have recognized the great Australian marsupial from its description, but he would have discovered at the same time, that he was in Australia, for the kangaroo only exists in that queen of islands.

The first moment of surprise passed, the two lads regretted that they had not been able to catch the strange and mysterious animal.

"It 's a very queer beast," repeated Penguin, "but as it eats grass, its flesh must be good to eat. What a pity that we could not knock it over! It would have made us a famous dinner."

"When I saw that big hare pocket her children, and run off on two legs like a man," said Daniel, "I was so perfectly thunderstruck that I forgot all about my sling. But the creature was not alone; I see that she has quietly joined that herd browsing over yonder. Perhaps we can get within range."

"I am sure the creatures don't seem to be very much afraid of us," said the Canadian; "but I doubt if you succeed in bringing down such large game with your clay balls. I don't see why we should n't follow the example of our Canadian Indians. There are plenty of reed-canes about; we have cords; let us see if we can't make a bow and some arrows. With these weapons, we might kill one of those big hares."

"What a capital idea!" exclaimed Daniel. "Let us carry it out at once."

They soon found a good flexible reed on the river bank, from which Penguin fashioned a primitive bow, which he strung with a strong cord.

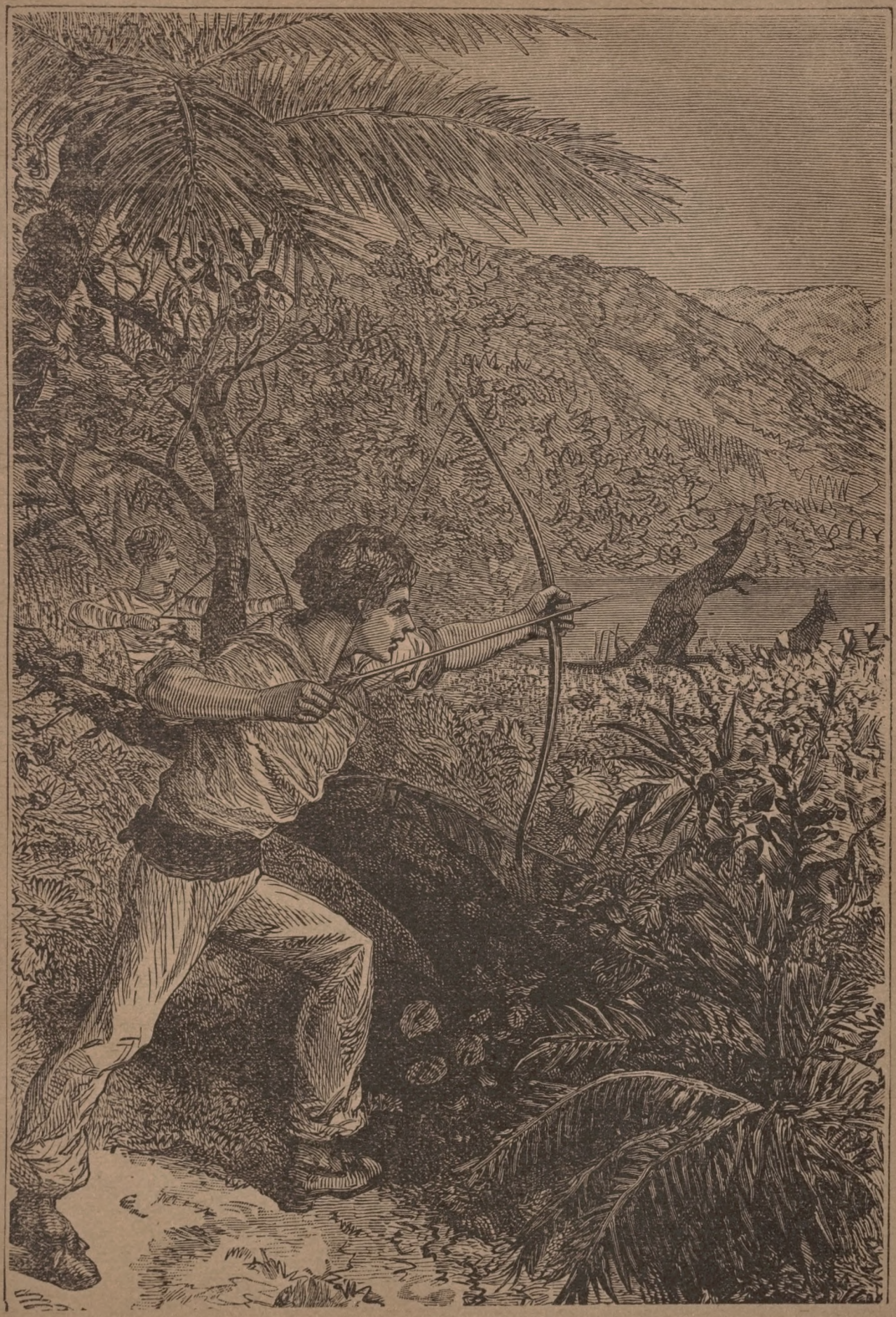
Meantime the young French boy was selecting light, dry rushes for arrows. Cut into pieces of two feet in length, well sharpened to a point at one end, they made quite a formidable weapon. To make them fly straighter, Penguin feathered them with plumes from a cockatoo's wing, and carefully dried the points by the fire, to make them hard and sharp.

Quick as they were, night overtook the ingenious youths before they had finished their task; but they worked by the light of their fire, and did not rest till they had completed two bows and a dozen or more arrows.

The first beams of daylight found them up and eager to try their novel arms.

The plain was deserted, and our ardent hunters were expressing their disappointment when they saw the kangaroos coming down from the hills to drink at the river. Soon the bounding, frolicking troop were ranged in line at a part of the bank forming a convenient watering-place.

The opportunity was not to be missed. The boys glided cautiously to within a dozen yards of the kangaroos, and, agreeing to aim at the same animal, they let their arrows fly. One of them went whizzing over the herd, and was lost in the stream; but the other buried itself in the side of a young kangaroo, which sprang up, uttering shrill cries.



"Agreeing to aim at the same animal, they let their arrows fly." — Page 230.

The terrified herd instantly took flight, and at a few bounds gained the shelter of a thicket.

The wounded beast followed his comrades; but his pain slackened his pace, and he was soon caught by the hunters, who rushed in pursuit of him. Daniel sent another arrow after him as he ran, and Penguin stretched him dead at their feet with a blow of his axe.

When they found themselves masters of this rich booty, the boys were seized with a fit of wild delight. With shouts of triumph, they executed a war-dance round the kangaroo which was quite worthy of the wild Hurons, Penguin's compatriots. Then, after curiously examining the creature which struck them as being so strange, they skinned it, and a fire was soon lighted to roast a quarter of the excellent venison.

The kangaroo, or "big hare" as they called it, was pronounced delicious. Accordingly, when breakfast was over, the Canadian set to work to smoke the rest of the carcass, in Indian fashion; for the hot Australian sun would soon have ruined it had they failed to take this precaution.



"The man prostrated himself."

CHAPTER XIX.

MR. FRIDAY.

THE two lads proceeded to explore the charming valley of the Glenelg by short marches. They had decided to push on to the source of the river, and, having settled the extent of their domain, they would come back and settle in the neighborhood of the mountain-pass, where they would build a hut within reach of both sea and mountain.

Daniel, with his characteristic mobility, was very enthusiastic at the prospect of this Robinson-Crusoe-like life. Looking forward without alarm to a long stay in this deserted valley, he already talked of planting a garden beside his future home and of taming a flock of kangaroos. The calmer Penguin kept his schemes to himself. Not that he dreaded this solitary life, — was not his boyhood

passed amid awful solitudes? — but he wished first to make sure that their isolation was complete and final.

They therefore advanced slowly, spending the day in hunting kangaroos, and sleeping at night beneath some tall tree. They felt perfectly secure, for they had never yet met with any dangerous animal. Still this part of Australia is not lacking in savage beasts; the woods are infested with wildcats and a peculiar species of wolf; but these creatures, which are all undersized, never attack a man and only leave their lair at midnight.

After journeying for several days the wanderers reached a vast swamp shut in by hills, in which the Glenelg took its rise. Flocks of water-birds of brilliant hues swarmed on the marshy banks; but at the approach of the boys they flew noisily away in alarm, and never rested until they were out of bow-shot.

Penguin, undiscouraged, waded boldly in and hiding among the reeds, managed to approach some of them. Daniel saw him bend his bow and send an arrow at an invisible object, successfully no doubt, for he instantly heard a shout of triumph. Then the Canadian sprang quickly back to shore.

"This is too much!" he cried breathlessly. "We certainly are on an enchanted island."

"What is the matter?" asked Daniel.

"Just now I saw a big duck's head, quite close beside me, emerging from the water. I took careful aim, let

fly my arrow and hit the creature, which struggled hard. I was afraid it would escape, and ran up to it. Well, it was a queer kind of a bird. Only look at it!"

And he held up a strange creature, looking very much like a small otter, but having a horny bill like a goose, and web-feet.

"But that is not a bird," exclaimed Daniel.

"Of course not, for I never saw a bird with four paws," said Penguin, "but neither did I ever see an otter with a duck's bill. And I can tell you, this queer beast makes good use of his bill. When I took hold of him, he gave me such a fierce bite that I nearly dropped him; but I wrung his neck for him with a twist of my hand."

"What a queer country!" muttered the French boy. "Hares as big as deer, that jump about like squirrels and carry their young in their pocket; ostriches; and otters with ducks' heads! No one would believe it if we were to tell them."

The Australian fauna is a strange one indeed. The animals which compose it are more like antediluvian races than like modern species; all its mammiferæ are marsupials, and it is the only place where the family of ornithorhyncidæ still exists, — a species which our ancestors would have classed among fabulous beings, and which in its structure seems to form a connecting link between beasts and birds.

The astonishment of the two boys was therefore very

natural. However, being a practical boy, Penguin declared that he meant to find out whether the ornithorhyncida tasted like fish, flesh, or fowl; and a fire being lighted, the creature was properly dressed and put to roast on the spot.

Half an hour after nothing was left of the fabulous creature but its bones. By a unanimous vote its delicate white meat was pronounced better than that of the kangaroo. Penguin carefully preserved the skin and the beak still adhering to the jaw-bone, intending to display this trophy in conclusive proof of his wonderful discovery.

Dinner done, they were about to resume their journey, when Daniel suddenly gave a terrified scream, which made Penguin rise hastily from packing his kitchen utensils.

Pale and trembling, the French boy, unable to utter a syllable, pointed to a neighboring thicket, where Penguin instantly perceived a human form, half hidden by the branches. The Canadian grew pale in his turn; but seizing his bow, he bent it, put in an arrow, and taking aim at the bush, held himself on the defensive.

This attitude at once produced its due effect, for a black man, entirely naked, immediately sprang from the bushes; but instead of falling upon the boys, he prostrated himself before them, his face to the ground, and muttered some unintelligible words.

"It 's a savage," said Daniel.

"Yes," said Penguin, "but he seems to be quite as much

afraid of us as we are of him. After all, he is a human being and he may be able to help us."

Dropping his bow, the Canadian went up to the still prostrate savage and touched him gently on the shoulder. The black man raised his head, showing a fine face, adorned with a short curly beard; then he got up slowly and began to talk with great volubility. He ended his long and unintelligible speech with these words twice repeated: "Good man! good man!" And at the same time he put his hand on Daniel's breast, then on that of Penguin.

"The savage speaks English!" cried both boys at once; but in vain did they ask him various questions in that language. The only answer which they received was: "Good man! good man!"

"Evidently this negro only knows those two words of English," said Daniel; "but he must have been with English people to learn them. Europeans must sometimes visit this island."

"At any rate," added Penguin, "this fellow is not the only one of his kind. We must make ourselves agreeable to him, and he will lead us to his tribe, where we may be lucky enough to meet, some day or other, with the merchants who come to trade with the blacks."

While they talked the Australian stood motionless and impassive, watching them. The poor fellow was extremely thin; he cast occasional greedy glances at the supply of smoked kangaroo meat which filled Penguin's bag. The

latter offered him a few pieces, which he eagerly devoured.

Won by this charitable deed, the savage waved his hand towards the east, as if inviting the boys to follow him in that direction. In fact, the two cabin boys had no sooner collected their little baggage than the Australian marched off, glancing behind him ever and anon, and smiling with satisfaction as he saw that his invitation was understood and accepted.

The road, taken by the black man and his companions, led away from the river and climbed the hill, here made up of huge rocks, intermingled with briers and bushes. As they ascended, the vast panorama of the valley of the Glenelg lay unfolded before them, with its magnificent park, sprinkled with superb trees. Finally, after an hour's clamber, they reached the border of a barren plain stretching far away to the foot of high blue mountains. Half-dried pools, covered with a saline efflorescence, shone like mirrors on the vast plain. Beside one of these puddles of water stood a wretched tent, made of kangaroo-skins propped up with bits of wood. This was the home of the savage, who showed it to them with pride; and as they approached it he uttered two guttural cries, which brought from the hovel a woman in scanty clothing and two naked children.

At sight of the strangers the little savages ran shrieking back into the tent; but the mother came forward

fearlessly, and greeted the boys with the sacramental "Good man! good man!"

She did not seem to understand English any better than her husband, but she appeared rather more intelligent; and Penguin having executed a lively pantomime, pointing in turn to Daniel and to the distant horizon, the woman pointed to the mountain, probably meaning that the white men lived in that direction.

"We are saved!" cried Penguin. "If there are Englishmen in this region these good people will take us to them."

And, in a moment of effusion, he rushed towards the negress and kissed her several times.

Before nightfall the lads were on the best of terms with every member of the Australian family, — "Mr. and Mrs. Friday, and all the little Fridays," as Daniel romantically christened them.

Next day however, after a night spent, not in the tent but just outside the miserable affair, our two friends tried to make their host understand that they were anxious to start off again. The savage merely shook his head and pointed towards the valley of the Glenelg; then, picking up two curiously shaped bits of wood which were lying on the ground, he feigned to leave the tent. Daniel and Penguin clung to him, and by their gestures entreated him not to forsake them. Poor Mr. Friday seemed greatly puzzled; finally, spying out the smoked meat which Pen-

guin carried in his bag, he took a piece in his hand and waved it wildly towards the valley; then turning towards the mountain, he scraped up a handful of sand and pretended to put it into his mouth.

"Good man!" cried the Canadian, "I understand."

"What does he mean?" asked the mystified Daniel.

"Mr. Friday wants to explain to us that before leaving, he must go down into the valley to get a supply of kangaroo meat, because, to reach the mountain, we must cross a desert where there is nothing but sand."

"Oh, indeed!" said Daniel. "Do you speak the savage's language, that you understood all that so quickly?" and, turning to the Australian, he said, "Good man! We will go with you."

Seeing that they followed him, armed with their bows, the Australian trotted down the valley road.

Reaching the river, the hunters saw a flock of kangaroos browsing near by. Daniel and Penguin were taking aim, when the Australian stopped them with a gesture. Taking an attitude worthy of an antique statue, he whirled round his head one of the curious bits of hard wood with which he had armed himself, and sent it whistling through the air, striking a kangaroo, which fell heavily to the ground. Before the panic-stricken herd had time to escape, the savage had flung his second stick; but he was probably too hasty, for the weapon, missing its aim, went whizzing over the head of the animal chosen, then, turning in its course,

came back as quickly as it went, and fell at the Australian's feet.

The boys were stupefied, not at the amazing skill of the savage, but at the marvellous power of the weapon, which, missing its aim, returned of its own accord to the hunter's hand.

Once more Daniel and Penguin agreed that they must have dropped upon an enchanted island.

Neither of them had ever heard of the boomerang, that strange weapon carved by the Australians from the wood of the gum-tree, which, uniting the two forms of motion, the projectile and the rotary, returns to the point from which it started, after describing a long elliptical course.

Their bows and arrows now seemed to them very ordinary and commonplace inventions; so leaving the savage to continue the chase alone, the two friends busied themselves with dressing the dead kangaroo, and, having lighted a large fire, they smoked the meat. Mrs. Friday, accompanied by her interesting offspring, hastened up to offer her assistance, and the day was spent in preparing the animals killed by the Australian.

This went on for two days more. The savages had evidently come to the edge of this valley to renew their stock of meat, and it was owing to this circumstance that the castaways had met them.

At last Mr. Friday, doubtless satisfied with the result of

his prowess, gave the signal to depart. The dried meat was divided into packages wrapped in eucalyptus leaves, and the travellers, black and white, each taking his portion, the little band returned to the plain. There the tent, being taken down, was soon transformed into two large blankets, in which the Australian and his wife majestically draped themselves. Then, casting a farewell glance at the lovely valley of the Glenelg, Daniel and Penguin set forth into the desert with their guides.

For a week the little party travelled over a horrid plain, baked by the sun. By day the travellers paused for a few moments only, to devour a morsel of kangaroo meat, barely warmed through over a brush-fire, and to drink a little brackish water. At night they stretched themselves on the sand, and the two cabin boys were glad to wrap themselves in one of the Australian's blankets; for the nocturnal radiation being very great on those high plains, the atmosphere was cold and piercing. At last they reached the fine chain of mountains to which the English colonists have given the name of Pyrenees.

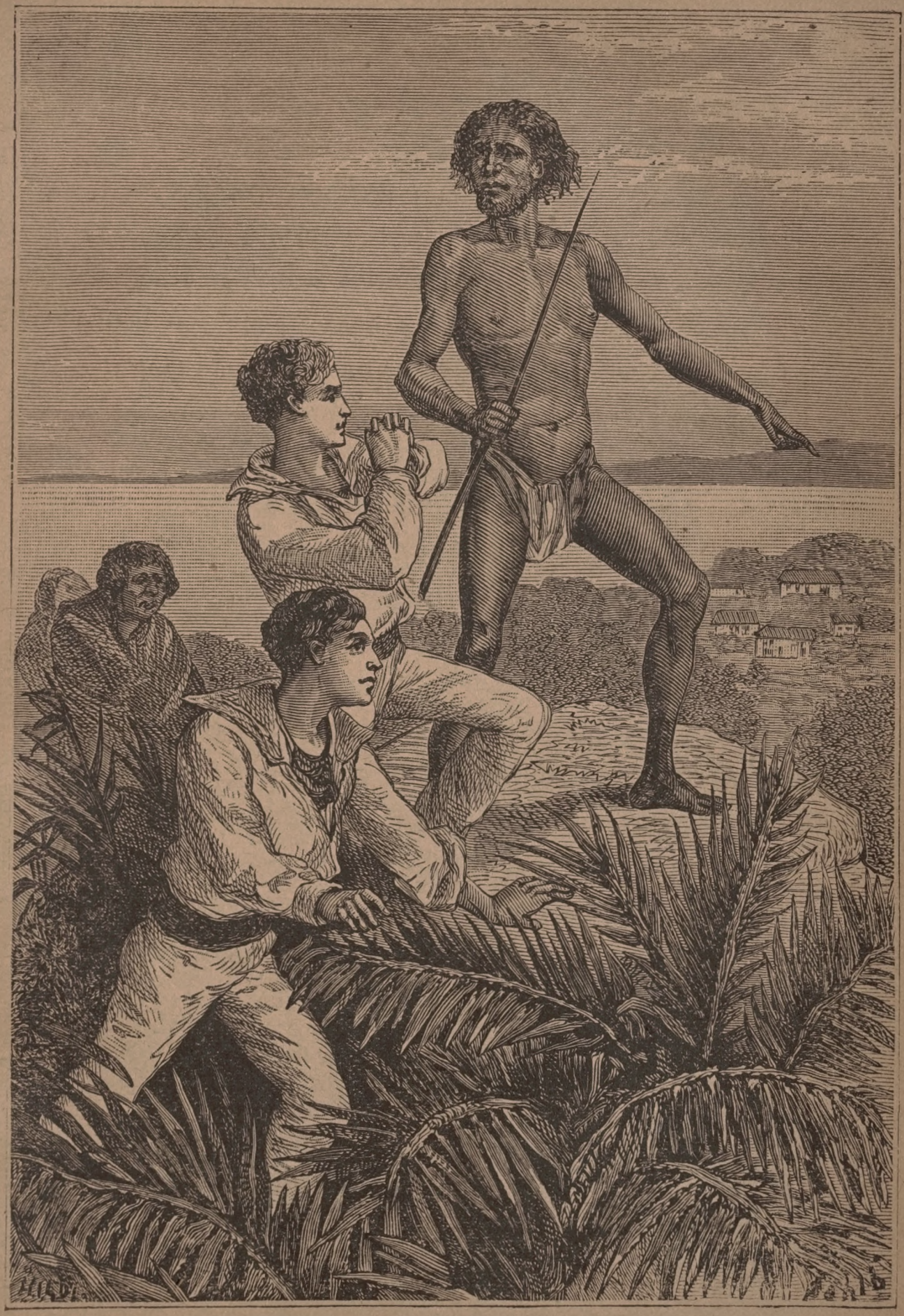
Our two friends fancied that they had reached their journey's end; they supposed that this region was inhabited by Europeans. Their disappointment was therefore very great when they saw their guide plunge down into lonely valleys, and lead them through goat-tracks, over steep places where the wind almost swept them away. From these heights they could look down upon endless

plains; the sea was nowhere visible. "Our island must be very big," thought they.

The Australian children had soon grown used to the presence of the strangers. Young as they were, these little creatures climbed over rocks and ran about all day long without any appearance of fatigue. Daniel and Penguin became very fond of them, and in any difficult or dangerous place each would take one of the young ones on his back. The stolid Australian simply muttered his eternal "Good man!" but the poor mother, stooping under the burden which she bore, cast affectionate, grateful glances at the two boys, and thanked them with some soft word from whose tone they gathered its sense.

How long they had been wandering in these mountains neither Daniel nor Penguin could tell. They had neglected to keep any account of the days since they started out. It was plain, at any rate, that their guide was leading them along the topmost crest of the mountains. Every time that they tried to coax him down towards the plain, the savage feigned a ludicrous fright and refused to change his course.

"I am familiar with savages," said Penguin. "This fellow undoubtedly knows what he is about, and we must take care not to vex him, unless we want him to abandon us. Perhaps the plain which we see over yonder is inhabited by hostile tribes, among whom we should be ex-



"Reaching the top, he showed them the plain below." — Page 247.

posed to the same dangers as himself. We must make up our minds to follow him wherever he leads."

And they still walked meekly on, exhausted and somewhat discouraged though they were. The farther they advanced, the more wild and rugged the mountain became. The peaks rising around them hid the plain, and they went through deep ravines, where mad torrents had dug, through the quartz rock, watercourses sparkling with crystals.

One morning, after a frugal meal set off by a few sour berries, the two boys were making ready for a fresh start when their friend Friday, stepping gravely before them, made them climb a rock overlooking the southern wall of the ravine. Reaching the top, he showed them the plain below, saying solemnly: "Good man!"

Sudden and unexpected joy may be as terrible as misfortune. The prisoner who has spent years in a gloomy cell is blinded by the sight of the sun. The unfortunate wretch who, wandering in the catacombs, recovers the guiding thread which his feverish hand has vainly sought, falls fainting to the ground. So the two poor boys stood stupefied and overwhelmed, staring at the plain pointed out to them by the stolid savage. Their eyes beheld many houses standing amidst blooming gardens; they saw before them, in the distance, a great city, surrounded by tall, smoking chimneys; they felt the stir and bustle of civilization all around them: but their heads swam, their hearts almost ceased to beat, and they felt that this cruel mirage must

kill them. Yes, it was indeed an enchanted island, and the black savage who had led them thus far was a demon, who conjured up this deceitful vision that he might revel in their agony before he lured them yet farther into his hell of sand, rocks, and monsters with bird's beak and serpent's tail!

But the Australian continued to repeat his eternal sing-song "Good man!" These words were the talisman which finally roused Penguin from his stupor.

"Yes, you are a good man, a noble fellow, in spite of your black skin," he cried, falling upon his neck. "I wish that I had all the treasures of the earth to reward you with."

Daniel wept, and his heart stole gradually back to life. He too embraced the savage and Mrs. Friday and the little niggers.

Now that they felt that this paradise was no illusion, that a reality was before them, they longed to enter into it. But the Australian refused to go a step farther; to all their prayers and entreaties, he merely replied by pointing to the north. They were therefore obliged to part. The boys kissed the poor savages once more, and gave them all they owned, the axe, the bark kettles, and their sash-bags, — simple presents; then, after a final farewell, they went down into the valley. When they had gone some distance they turned to look behind, and saw the Friday family still standing on a rock, gazing after them.

An hour after, they entered upon a well-trodden road. Close beside them, in a field, a European shepherd watched a flock of sheep. Trembling with emotion, they approached him.

"Excuse me, sir," said Penguin; "but can you tell us where we are?"

"On the road from Ballarat to Melbourne," was the curt reply.

"What is the name of the city which lies before us?"

"Melbourne, of course."

"But then we are in Australia, are n't we, sir?" asked Daniel in faltering tones.

"Unless you think you are in the moon!" said the ill-tempered shepherd. And seeing that the French boy leaned on his friend for support at this amazing news, he added in a surly voice: "I see that you are both drunk, which is shameful for boys of your age; if it was n't for that, I would teach you not to play bad jokes on a respectable man like me."



"Daniel listened eagerly."

CHAPTER XX.

MELBOURNE.

MELBOURNE is one of the youngest cities in the world. In 1851, a thick forest of gum-trees, among which the Australian savage roamed in chase of kangaroos, still covered the spot now occupied by this city, which sprang from the earth as if by magic, with its vast wards and districts containing more than 300,000 inhabitants, its magnificent streets, its countless monuments and statues, and its har-



Melbourne, the capital of the gold-diggers. — Page 253.

bor, towards which hundreds of ships are constantly pressing from every quarter of the globe. The magician who conjured up this sudden transformation, who uttered the mystical spell, was the monarch Gold.

Here, as in California, the discovery of gold in 1854, attracted a swarm of greedy adventurers, who, digging up the earth and turning it over and over, brought forth the precious metal in quantities and scattered luxury and wealth broadcast over the land hitherto deserted and forsaken. Lured by the greed for gold, farmers left their fields, merchants their shops, sailors their ships. A tremendous army of invaders poured into this part of Australia.

Melbourne became the capital of the gold-diggers; thither they returned with their suddenly acquired riches, and demanded hotels, theatres, taverns, and gambling saloons, where they could squander the vile metal which they had all too easily won.

The new city, born so abruptly, led a feverish, exciting life, in nothing like the existence of other peaceful lands. The miners who came back rich went away poor; fortunes were made and lost with equal speed; but every day fresh treasures were found, and with them the gold fever raged anew.

It was, therefore, scarcely likely that any of the many people who thronged the broad sidewalks of Swanston Street, on the tenth of October, 1865, would waste a glance

on the two lads in ragged clothes, who walked through the great city with haggard faces and wondering eyes. Anywhere else some charitable soul would have taken pity on their wretched appearance and their wan faces, stamped with the marks of want and fatigue: but here no one turned his head; all hastened onward as if rushing towards some mysterious and invisible goal.

Daniel and Penguin had reached the first houses of Melbourne some hours before, and ever since had been wandering vaguely about the streets, walking on and on, as if to get farther into the heart of the city, to gain more complete assurance of the deliverance whose unexpectedness still made their brains reel. Little by little the sensation became less acute; then both, without exchanging a word, felt so alone, so deserted, in the midst of this busy, selfish throng, that they began to regret the desert and their almost happy life there.

"Poor Friday," said Penguin at last, "he was really good!"

"And our lovely valley, with its tall trees and sparkling river!" said Daniel; and completing his thought, he added: "What is to become of us here, pennniless and friendless?"

"For my part, I am fairly starving," replied the Canadian; "and, as I very much doubt whether the Melbourne landlords will trust us on our good looks, I think we had better eat a little of our dried meat."

"Yes," said Daniel, "we can consider our situation afterwards. Luckily, I did not leave our whole stock of provisions with Mr. Friday; we have enough to live on for several days."

They accordingly sat down on the curb-stone and ate a few mouthfuls of meat.

"The most essential thing now," said Penguin, "is to scrape up a little money somehow, so that we can spend the night at some tavern. We are no longer in the desert, and if the policemen found us sleeping in the open air, they would be quite capable of offering us shelter at the the police-station, and I have no taste for the kind of society to be met with there."

"Neither have I," said Daniel; "but how are we going to set about earning our money?"

"That is the embarrassing part of it; still we can't beg. Perhaps fortune will favor us."

They accordingly continued to walk on in search of a job; but evening drew near, and none had offered. Suddenly they saw a sort of big omnibus coming towards them, drawn by six strong horses. Wagon and horses were both white with dust. The coachman cracked his whip cheerily. The coach had evidently come from a long distance.

"There's our chance," cried Penguin. "Come on, Daniel!" And he ran after the wagon.

A moment later it drew up before the coach-office.

Two policemen got out first, armed with guns, then came a man who might be taken for their prisoner, he looked so like a robber with his torn clothes and unshaven chin.

Daniel made a wry face when he saw the contents of the stage. However, the officers walked away; the man left behind, paid the conductor his fare and throwing a big bundle of clothes over his shoulder, prepared to go on. An idea flashed through Penguin's brain. What if the stranger were a digger returning from the mines? Then, in spite of his destitute air, he was probably rich, perhaps generous, at any rate vain. Without an instant's delay the Canadian went up to the traveller, and, respectfully pulling off his cap, said humbly: "Shall I carry my lord's baggage up to the hotel?"

"That 's a good idea!" exclaimed the stranger. "I must say I was a fool to take so much trouble." And flinging his bundle to Penguin, he added: "Go on, my boy, and take me to the best hotel in Melbourne. You shall be well paid, never fear."

The Canadian did not know which was the best hotel in Melbourne. But, without a word, he turned up Swanston Street, closely followed by the miner, and seeing one of the huge caravansaries newly built there, he led the traveller to the door. In spite of his poverty-stricken appearance, he was received with every mark of the most profound respect.

Daniel, who had followed them at a distance, although

he did not understand his companion's manœuvre, soon saw him come out of the hotel and run gayly up to him.

"I made a good guess," shouted Penguin, "he was a digger. It seems that he has just come from the mines with a pocket full of gold, and also with a desire to make up for his long privations. See what he gave me for carrying his bundle a few steps."

"A dollar?"

"No, much better, — a two dollar and a half gold piece. Now we will look for a hotel, but we had better choose a less aristocratic quarter."

Going down Swanston Street, the two cabin boys reached the harbor. There, about the wharves, were numerous taverns, whose humble exterior gave no promise of luxury or of comfort, but merely of cheap quarters. Among these, the boys soon saw one, perhaps rather dirtier than the rest, with a lantern hanging before it and shining through the darkness. Upon the lantern was the name: "The Jolly Companions, French Hotel."

"Let us go in here," said Daniel. "We may find fellow countrymen who will help us."

"Very well," said the Canadian.

And, pushing open the glass door, they entered a low, smoky room, so dimly lighted by a kerosene lamp that they could scarcely see the dozen tables which stood about the room and were occupied by a crowd of sailors, drinking, singing and making a frightful din.

Penguin made a bargain with the landlord to let him have a room with two cot-beds for the sum of fifty cents, which he paid in advance. Then he ordered a simple dinner, and the friends sat down in one corner without attracting the attention of their riotous neighbors.

But this was not the only room on the ground floor of the Jolly Companions. As is the custom in similar places, a small room, shut off from the common hall by a partition, was reserved for distinguished guests or those fond of seclusion.

This partition, however, but partially glazed, proved a trifling barrier, and the two boys heard occasional shouts from the gay party established on the other side.

Penguin, having swallowed his soup and a few bits of bread, put his head on the table and fell asleep, overcome by fatigue.

Daniel was dreaming with his eyes wide open; he still heard the words: "It is Australia!" ringing in his ears, but his tired brain refused to take up the thread of association. Why was he so anxious to come to this country? He had quite forgotten.

Suddenly he seemed to catch these words above all the noise, "Mine . . . secret . . . treasure . . . " uttered on the other side of the partition. He listened eagerly, and a loud voice immediately added: —

"You can keep your secret to yourself. I would n't give you five cents for it. Every man that lands here has a secret or a plan in his pocket — "

"What 's the use of screaming so loud?" said another and an angry voice.

Then silence reigned, or at least Daniel could hear nothing more. But that was enough for him. He waked Penguin, and they went to the wretched garret where they were to sleep.

The Canadian instantly threw himself upon the bed, and in a second his snores shook the walls. As for Daniel, taking his knife from his pocket, he ripped a seam in his pantaloons and took out a scrap of paper which he began to read attentively.

It was Bastien Moreau's plan.



"The French boy looked up."

CHAPTER XXI.

OLD SCHEMES AND OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

DANIEL was sleeping soundly when he heard Penguin's merry voice shouting to him:

"Come, lazy-bones, get up! It is nine o'clock already and more than time to set to work, for we must earn our dinner and our next night's lodging."

The young French boy rubbed his eyes. After re-read-

ing the extract from Bastien's journal, he had gone to sleep with his mind full of bright prospects, — prospects which his dreams at once turned to reality. Rich, weighed down with gold, he saw himself making a triumphant entry into the best hotel in Melbourne; the servants bowed to the ground before him; all hastened to forestall his least desire, — and suddenly, at the sound of Penguin's voice, he woke and found himself in a squalid garret, where the daylight struggled dimly through a narrow, dirty, grated window. Bitter disillusion! Would the dream never come true?

Daniel heaved a sigh and got up.

"You sigh!" said Penguin. "Yet I think I 've let you have a good long nap. But we are not here to amuse ourselves. We shall soon come to the end of our last dollar. What shall we do then?"

"You are right," said Daniel. "We must try to find some work which will support us. I don't think that will be hard; for, by what I have heard, workmen are very scarce in these parts, especially since the discovery of the gold mines."

"Our best plan," continued Penguin, "is to try to find a good captain, and embark as soon as possible. I 've had quite enough of this place, where everything is topsy-turvy, where beggars are great lords, where savages are more charitable than white men, where birds are quadrupeds, and trees have neither fruit nor shade."

"But surely you know that we cannot possibly leave Australia."

"How so? I know no reason to the contrary."

"Of course you don't," said Daniel with some embarrassment. Then, giving the Canadian's hand an affectionate squeeze, he added:

"Forgive me, dear Martial. I love you better than a common friend, you are like a brother to me. I owe you so much already that I don't know how I shall ever be able to pay my debt of gratitude. You have saved my life twice over — "

"Don't mention it," interrupted the Canadian. "I only did what you would have done in my place."

"Well, then I love you because you are good, far better than I am. So, if I did not confide my secret to you sooner, and bare my whole soul to you, it was because my conscience sometimes reproached me with my past conduct, and I feared your clear eyes would make me blush. But I will be frank; you shall know all and you shall decide what is to be done."

Then Daniel told Penguin his whole history, from the time he left Castel, until he shipped with Captain Green; he explained how he was led to open the miner's portfolio; then he told of Dominic's flight and the chance discovery of Bastien Moreau's plan.

The story ended, Daniel bowed his head and awaited his friend's decision. The latter reflected for some time; at last he asked: —

"Do you know what became of Mrs. Moreau?"

"Didn't I tell you that she left Cette without giving any one her address?"

"Well, I will tell you plainly," continued Penguin, "that the only thing for which I blame you in this affair, is for going off without making every possible effort to find the miner's widow. Only fancy, perhaps the poor woman does not yet know that her husband is dead; she may not have heard of the fortune that he left her, and may have been absolutely in want for the last two years."

"What can I do?" asked Daniel.

"First of all, you must try to pick up some information about Bastien Moreau here. Didn't he tell you that his whole fortune was invested in stock in Victoria?"

"Yes, in Melbourne and the neighborhood."

"Heaven knows what may have become of that fortune, there being no one to take care of it, in a country which is the meeting-place of all the robbers on earth. At any rate, since a lucky chance placed Bastien's secret in your hands, we must try to recover the treasure; and when we have found it, we will go back to France and give Mrs. Moreau all this gold, which honestly belongs to her. Isn't that what you would wish to do?"

Daniel blushed. He hesitated, but overcoming all false shame, he said:

"No, Martial, that is not what I should do. When this

paper fell into my hands, I thought of myself only; it seemed to me that the treasure was mine; I felt that I was rich already —"

"Oh! that was wrong," interrupted Penguin.

"I knew that it was not right. The secret weighed me down, and oppressed me; and the simple, honest solution to the puzzle, which you propose, never occurred to me. You are right; we must find the treasure, and restore it to Mrs. Moreau. Oh! how happy I am! I wish I were as good as you are!"

And, with a burst of gratitude, he fell upon his friend's neck and hugged him with all his might.

"You are better than you think," said Penguin, returning the embrace; "only you do not always see quite clearly, and then you rush blindly forward without stopping to consider that you may run against a stone wall."

Then, to conclude this simple moral lesson, he added:

"Let me see this famous plan."

Daniel drew it from its hiding place, unfolded it and laid it on the table before Penguin, who studied it attentively.

"Do you know where the Murray and the Murrumbidgee are?" he asked.

"Gracious, no!" said Daniel. "All that I could gather from Bastien's journal is that this place is in the interior of the country, in the heart of a desert."

"Good gracious! How are we to get there? It's not so easy to make a long journey in this wild country, as we know from experience. Then we shall have to buy tools and provisions, which will cost us a pretty penny, and just at present we have only one dollar, exactly enough to pay for our breakfast this morning; for this wretched inn is as dear as the best hotel in Quebec."

"Well, we will wait until we have earned a little money," said Daniel. "We will work hard."

"That's right. While we work, we can collect the necessary information, and we will not start on our journey until we can go well equipped. It's a bargain. Now let us eat a few mouthfuls and then we can decide what to do next."

They went down into the large saloon and ordered breakfast. The room was very dark, although the sun shone brightly outside, and in the half-light which prevailed, the two boys did not notice a man sitting alone at a table near theirs. The stranger, on the contrary, stared curiously at the new arrivals. Probably satisfied with the result of his examination, he rose and walked boldly up to the young men.

"Well," said he to Daniel, "was n't I right when I said that sailors were always meeting?"

The French boy looked up, and exclaimed: "Dominic!"

"The very same," said the sailor; then, turning to the Canadian, he added: "Mr. Penguin, I believe?"

"Just so," said the boy.

The two lads looked at each other in some embarrassment; but the sailor, not at all disconcerted by their chilly reception of him, pulled a stool up to the table and sat down, shouting to the servant:

"You can serve my breakfast with these gentlemen's order."

Then, addressing Martial:

"You can't think how glad I am to be among friends again, for you will permit me to consider you as such, Mr. Penguin, I hope. Our friends' friends are our friends, are n't they? That is an old proverb," he said, laughing.

The Canadian did not answer this amiable remark; but the imperturbable Dominic continued:

"I am all the gladder to see my dear friend Daniel again, because I really have a great many apologies to make to him. Imagine, when I left the Three Parrots, I was so unhappy at parting with my young friend and ward that I ran off like a thief in the night. I snatched my bundle of duds from the drawer, stuffed it under my arm, and was off."

Daniel's face grew dark as he heard this shameless tale.

"I went on board ship," continued the sailor, "and threw my duds into a corner, and never thought of them again. The ship was bound for Algiers with a cargo of



"You can serve my breakfast with these gentlemen's order." — Page 266.

liquors; from there we went back and forth between Oran and Carthagena; finally we put in at Madeira, where the captain was to take a cargo of cochineal —"

Penguin, who felt little interest in this story, could not repress a yawn.

"This don't amuse you," said Dominic, "but wait till I get to the end. At Madeira I fell in with you again, — at least with my young friend, for I had not the honor of your acquaintance then, Mr. Penguin. I found you in the thick of the fight, and was lucky enough to lend a hand. Next day I was still rejoicing over our meeting when the captain turned me off for a trifle. I paid him off, took up my bundle, and took to my heels. Two hours after, I had shipped on board the Bulldog, bound for Melbourne. Once on board, I began to settle myself in my new quarters, and as my clothes were anything but fresh, I thought I would make a change. I opened my bundle, and, shiver my timbers! what do you think I saw right among my own things? You never could guess!"

Daniel quivered with excitement.

"Well," said Dominic, "there I found, in my bundle, Daniel's portfolio!"

"Bastien Moreau's portfolio!" cried both boys.

"Exactly. When I saw it," continued the sailor, "I came near fainting. 'Martigues, my friend,' said I to myself, 'you are a ruined man. Your friend, Daniel Riva, will think you have robbed him. The best thing that you can do

is to jump head foremost from the bulwarks and hide yourself at the bottom of the sea.' However, on consideration, I said, 'Impossible. Daniel Riva knows you; he knows you to be an honest man. He will never dare to suspect his old messmate —'"

"What have you done with the portfolio?" asked Daniel, in a trembling voice.

"Oh, there 's quite a history connected with it," said the sailor, with feigned embarrassment. "When I came here, every one was mad about mining. I did like every one else and went, but luck was against me. I returned to Melbourne without a penny. Then I remembered the money in the portfolio. I thought that if you were here, you would never refuse to help me; so I took the money, but not all. There is a hundred dollars left; it is yours, and I am ready to return it to you."

After some fumbling in his pocket, Dominic pulled out forty dollars, which he offered to Daniel.

"This is an instalment," he added. "I 'll give you the rest as soon as I can."

"And the portfolio?" repeated the boy.

"The portfolio? Here it is."

And, with an air of studied simplicity, the sailor laid the leather case on the table.

Daniel could not believe his eyes. With a trembling hand he opened it, pressed the spring, and searched the secret drawer. The contents were undisturbed. Then,

rising, full of emotion, he threw his arms round the crafty sailor's neck, crying:

"Thank you, Dominic. You have acted well."

The sailor stammered a few excuses.

"But," continued Daniel, "you will be left without money."

"I sha'n't be rich."

"Well, take back half of this. Half will do for us."

Dominic pocketed the twenty dollars without a word. Then, offering his hand to Penguin, who took it coldly, he said:

"I must keep an appointment now; but we will dine together to-night, that's understood."

And he went away, delighted with his skilful acting.

For, in fact, Dominic Martigues' story to the two cabin boys was nothing but an ingeniously woven tissue of lies. Having stolen the portfolio entrusted to Daniel, for the sole purpose of getting the money which it contained, he decided, after reading Bastien Moreau's journal, to try his luck in Australia. Unfortuately for him, once there, it did not take him long to find out how vague and indeterminate was the information left behind by the unfortunate miner. However, he had fallen in with adventurers of a worse class than himself, and had tried to hunt out the gold bearing discovered by Moreau. After a long and fruitless search in the interior of the country, he returned to Melbourne, stripped of everything he owned. There, by

haunting the gambling-hells frequented by miners who hoped to increase their fortunes at the tables, he at first managed to make a scanty living; then a lucky chance brought him a large sum.

The scoundrel was too wily to trust long in the favors of the blind goddess, or rather in the credulity of ignorant players, and he was looking for some fresh scheme when chance threw him across Daniel's path. At sight of the young man, his plan was rapidly arranged. He said to himself that the boy must possess Bastien's secret and could clear up the points left obscure in the miner's journal. He must therefore recover his lost place in the French boy's esteem at any price.

We have seen how a few gold pieces and the restoration of the portfolio sufficed to win the desired result.

Daniel, in fact, was completely taken in by Martigues' trick. As soon as the latter was gone he expressed his delight to Penguin.

"You can't think how glad I am to get hold of that portfolio again," he said. "It seems as if the good resolutions which you persuaded me to make this morning were already bringing me luck. At least, if we find the treasure now, I can carry out Mr. Moreau's last wishes. And when I think that I really believed that Dominic was guilty, — such an honest man, such a jolly companion as he was!"

"His story struck me as rather doubtful," remarked

Penguin, who had been but slightly affected by Dominic's demonstrations of friendship.

"That is because you are still under the impression of what I told you this morning," said Daniel.

"Perhaps so; but, at any rate, we can get along very well without your friend."

"On the contrary, Martigues may prove very useful to us. He knows the country, he has money —"

"Your money."

"Never mind," said Daniel hotly, "the main point is that now, thanks to Dominic, we can carry out our project without delay; and, moreover, we shall have a loyal, trusty helper in him."

"Listen," said Penguin. "It is not for me to accuse a man who, after all, has given you a proof of a certain amount of honesty. The only thing which I ask of you is, that if he joins us, you will not tell him your secret until it is too late for him to make use of it; that is, until we have actually reached the spot."

"I promise you, dear Martial; and for the future you shall keep the plan of the mine for better security."

The twenty dollars given to Daniel by Dominic relieved the boys from pressing want for the present; so, by Penguin's advice, they at once set out in pursuit of information concerning Bastien Moreau's fortune. They applied to the French consul, the Colonial Grant Office, and to

various government offices; but wherever they went, they received the same answer:

"No one of the name had ever been known in Melbourne."

In vain they insisted that the man had been there; Moreau had left no trace behind him. Then what had become of his fortune?

On their return to the Jolly Companions, the two cabin boys found Dominic waiting for them at the door.

"Come along!" he cried as far off as he could see them. "It is past seven o'clock, and I am sure our dinner will be cold." When they entered the house he pushed them through the big saloon, and led them into the private dining-room.

"I engaged this room," he said, "so that we might be more at our ease to celebrate our happy and providential encounter."

Dinner was served, and passed off very merrily, owing to the sailor's never-failing flow of spirits. Daniel was already won to his cause; and even Penguin felt his suspicions gradually fade; yet his face clouded when he heard Dominic exclaim after dinner:

"Now let us talk! First of all, Daniel, tell me how it happens that I find you here at Melbourne when I left you cabin boy on board the Atlanta."

The French boy gave a brief account of the battle, the

shipwreck, and finally of their strange arrival at the capital of Victoria.

"Your story sounds like a miracle," cried the sailor. "If I did n't know you for the most truthful boy on earth, I should think you were making fun of me, and that you had simply left the Atlanta because you got tired of the life."

"Could you think that we would desert the ship?" said Penguin somewhat angrily.

"Oh! Heaven forbid!" said Dominic. "I know too well how fond you were of your captain. Besides, the Melbourne papers have published several articles about the mysterious disappearance of the Atlanta and two American frigates sent in pursuit of her You alone, so far as I see, can clear up this mystery. But all this," he continued, "does not tell me what you intend doing, now that you have reached Melbourne."

"An accident, or say rather the hand of Providence brought us hither to fulfil a sacred trust," said Daniel. "But it is a secret to be guarded with religious care."

"In that case, you know, mum 's the word!" said the sailor, putting his finger to his lips.

"But we cannot accomplish our task alone. We need an assistant, a companion. I thought of you at once. I know that I can depend on your friendship, and I am ready to tell you the secret on one condition."

"What is it?" asked Dominic, whose very lips quiv-

ered with excitement as he saw the victim ready to bite.

"That you swear never to reveal it to a living soul."

"I swear on my word of honor," hastily replied the sailor.

"The first part of it you know already. You know that Bastien Moreau, the miner who died in my arms at Castel, discovered a gold mine of fabulous extent somewhere in this part of Australia. Well, I know the exact situation of the mine."

"You have Bastien Moreau's plan?" eagerly asked Dominic.

"I have the plan," answered Daniel.

"That is," interrupted Penguin, "my friend Riva recollects perfectly the description of the situation of the mine, given him by Mr. Moreau."

"Oh! that 's a different thing," said the disappointed sailor. "It would be better to have some writing, if it were but a fragment. One's memory is not always to be trusted. But where is this famous mine?"

"Near the Murray," began Daniel. But he stopped at a slight sign from Penguin.

"That is not much of a guide," said Dominic. "The Murray is a very big river; it is three or four times as long as the Rhine. I don't suppose that you intend to follow it from its source to the sea in search of your mine."

"I cannot tell you anything more now. You shall come with us, and I will show you where we are to dig."

Dominic saw that it was useless to insist. He therefore went on:

"We shall need money, — a great deal of money."

"We have applied to you for the express purpose of helping us to get it."

"Good! I have friends here, I will do what is needful. But what will you give us in return?"

Daniel did not expect this question. He was puzzled how to answer, and Penguin came to his help:

"The treasure which we seek does not belong to us," he said. "It is our purpose to give it to Bastien Moreau's widow, if we find it."

Dominic smiled with ironical pity; but rising hastily, he gravely plucked his old fur cap from his head, and addressed the boys as follows: —

"Gentlemen, your cause is most noble. No one knows better than I, what is due to the widow and orphan. But I have an old mother at home in the Pyrenees myself" [she had been dead twenty years], "for whom I must work and save. My filial love forbids me to play the hero. This very night, in this very place, I refused to take part in a brilliant enterprise in which I was offered a fourth of the profits — "

"What then?" asked Daniel.

"There are three of us," continued the sailor. "Let us

divide the treasure into equal parts, and you can do what you like with your two shares."

"Agreed," said the Canadian.

"Moreover," senteniously concluded Martigues, "I must draw the attention of Mr. Penguin, who does not know me, — to prove my disinterestedness to him, I say, I must draw his attention to the fact that I don't ask to be repaid for the expenses which I am to defray in advance."

The matter settled thus, the three friends parted, Daniel absolutely delighted, Penguin resolved to keep a good watch on their new messmate, and the latter trying to hit upon some plan for getting possession of all the treasure.



"An enormous boulder barred their progress."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GOLD MINE.

At the close of the council held in the private room of the Jolly Companions, Dominic went immediately to work to prepare for the expedition upon which he was so soon to start with the two cabin boys. He speedily collected the necessary tools for working a mine, and a little tent for shelter in the desert; then he laid in a supply of flour and canned meat sufficient to last several months. To these

purchases he added a second-hand rifle and a pair of revolvers, — weapons indispensable to the safety of the expedition in a country where thieves are as plenty as gold-diggers. Lastly he bought two strong pack-mules at a bargain from the English Colonization Agency. His purse was completely emptied by all these acquisitions; and accordingly, one fine morning, the little party left Melbourne and proceeded northwards.

Daniel and Penguin had gleaned all the necessary information in regard to the course which they should pursue in order to reach the confluence of the Murray and Murrumbidgee at the office of the French consul. This gentleman also gave them a map of Victoria, upon which he obligingly marked their route and the necessary data. The two boys had conducted this part of the business with great prudence, and even on the day of their departure Dominic had no idea to which part of the valley of the Murray they were going.

"It seems to me," he repeated, "that it would only be fair to tell me where we are going. I can't see why you make so many mysteries about it."

"Why, my dear Dominic, I have already told you that we were going to the Murray valley. Isn't that enough for you? You will be with us: what more do you want?"

"Very well," grumbled the sailor. "You don't trust me; you make a great mistake."

Two days after their departure the travellers reached

the mountains which shelter Melbourne on the north, and entered a narrow valley through which a branch of the Yarra-Yarra runs. They had gone but a few steps when Daniel recognized the spot where good Mr. Friday left them.

"The first time we stood here," said he to the sailor, "we never dreamed that we were so near to one of the largest cities in the world. We thought that we were on one of the Sunda Isles, only inhabited by black natives."

"And to think that the English called this Mount Disappointment!" cried Penguin, who was tracing their course on the map. "I shall scratch out the name, and put in Mount Providence; for I never saw more clearly that it was the hand of Providence which guided us, through every danger, to the city whither a sacred duty summoned us."

"Providence had nothing to do with it," muttered Dominic; "still, I can't understand how it happened that you were led out of the wilderness by a savage, for the natives of this country, they tell me, are very fierce and are hostile to Europeans. If we meet any of them, we had better keep them within rifle-range."

"That is just it," cried Penguin. "Civilized people complain of the cruelty of savages; but wherever they meet them, they fire at them without more ado. Savages are no worse than other men when they are kindly treated. At home, in Canada, the French have made

brothers of the Indians who live among them, and these so-called savages are by no means the least useful citizens of our young confederacy; while, ill-treated in the United States, the same Indians have proved intractable foes to the whole white race."

The little party spent several days in crossing the barren mountain-chain. But beyond it the travellers found lovely plains covered with rich herbage, browsed over by splendid herds of cattle, under the watchful eye of European shepherds; for, while the miners sought for precious metal in every direction, more prudent colonists advanced into the interior with their cattle, and took unmolested possession of vast territories, which to-day are worth more than all the gold ever taken from Australian mines. These true pioneers of civilization had already entered the Murray Valley in 1865, and had cleared farms which reckoned their cattle, their sheep, and their horses by the hundreds of thousands. The travellers, therefore, had no difficulty in purchasing fresh supplies of provisions, and moreover the shepherds put them on the best road to reach the lower river. Unfortunately, it obliged them to turn their backs on the smiling Normandy of Australia and to leave green pastures for the burning desert.

The two boys marched fearlessly through the melancholy wastes which they had faced before, but Dominic displayed a childish terror. He felt as if the lads were

leading him to certain death. He complained incessantly, and repeatedly declared that he would not go a step farther in this lonely region, where he was exposed to die of heat, of thirst, and perhaps of hunger.

However, after three weeks' journey and terrible fatigue, the little party reached a large lake, the sight of which brought an exclamation of joy to the lips of both boys.

"That is Lake Tyrrell," cried Penguin. "We must walk a short distance to the east, and to-morrow we shall be on the banks of the Murray, which is scarcely ten miles distant."

"Come, Dominic, cheer up!" said Daniel. "Look at the map, and you will see that we are not deceiving you."

"The map, the map!" said the sailor. "What's the use of my looking at it? If it were a chart, I might recognize the soundings; but how can I tell whether this lake is really the one you say it is? It is not the first ugly pond that we've passed: they all look alike; the country is full of them, and their waters are almost as salt as the sea. Listen to me. If I do not reach your famous Murray to-morrow, I shall turn about, and go back to Melbourne as fast as I can."

But, as Penguin had announced, the next day, after a long walk, the travellers reached the great Australian river. They greeted with a shout the beautiful, blue stream as it rolled between its steep, sandy banks. The water being quite shallow at this season of the year, they

soon found a place which the mules could ford, and then encamped upon the right-hand bank.

Two days after, still following the course of the river, they found their progress blocked by a lovely stream, which mingled its muddy waters with the clear crystal of the Murray. This was the Murrumbidgee. They crossed it with some difficulty, as the current was strong and the water quite deep.

On reaching the further shore, while Dominic sulkily shook the water from his dripping garments, the two cabin-boys, giving way to a mad burst of joy, danced and threw up their caps, cutting every imaginable caper.

"Has your bath driven you crazy?" growled Dominic. "I don't see what you find to please you so much in this vile country. For my part, I should much prefer —"

"Hush up!" cried Daniel. "I don't want to know where you'd rather be; for I am sure that in a few minutes you will be as happy as we are."

"Are we there?" asked the sailor.

"Yes," said Penguin, "we are at our journey's end, or nearly so."

"Are you in earnest? You're not deceiving me?" cried Dominic, whose eyes began to sparkle.

"Hark!" said the Canadian. "Daniel shall repeat the words of Bastien Moreau."

"These," said Daniel, "are the miner's exact words: 'Starting from the point where the Murrumbidgee joins

the Murray, follow the right bank of the river for about six hundred paces, down to a narrow, rocky ravine, the mouth of which is shaded by a few gum-trees; then, turning your back on the river, go to the north, and follow the course of the ravine. After walking two hours you will come to an enormous stone standing alone, which marks — '"

"Marks what?" asked the sailor, who had listened with open mouth and ears.

"Good gracious! I don't know," said Daniel. "I suppose it is the mouth of the mine, the spot where we are to dig."

"Never mind," interrupted Penguin. "We will look and see."

"But, after all," added Dominic, "how can you be sure that this is the Murrumbidgee?"

"From the position of the lake which we passed three days ago, and by calculating our journey down the Murray, I am sure," said Penguin, "that this river is the Murrumbidgee."

"Well, then, lads, let us be off!" cried the sailor. "Don't let us lose a moment's time."

They must hasten, indeed, if they wished to gain the ravine before night, for the sun was sinking rapidly towards the horizon.

Penguin, planting a stake at the extreme angle of the bank which overhung the meeting of the waters, began

to pace down the left shore of the river, counting his steps with great care. His two companions followed him, full of the anxiety always felt on approaching a long and eagerly desired goal.

They passed by several ravines which opened upon the river, and saw several groups of gum-trees; but Penguin did not pause.

At last, he cried out "Six hundred," and stopped.

The bank stretched before them steep and high, without a break.

The Canadian resumed his walk. He counted up to seven hundred, and halted again. Ten yards away a group of trees half hid a narrow fissure in the bank.

"I see what it is," he exclaimed. "My steps are not so long as those of the miner. But I feel certain that this is the right place."

He rushed forward, and ran through the trees, followed by his comrades. Doubt was no longer possible. Behind the gum-trees lay a deep, narrow ravine.

All at once Daniel called his companions, who were hurrying on into the ravine, and showed them the letters "B. M." carved on the bark of a tree.

"There is Bastien Moreau's signature," said he. "Now you see that we are on the right path. It will be better for us to stop here for to-day; night is at hand, and you know that it will take us two hours to reach the big stone."

The travellers accordingly sat down at the foot of the gum-trees to rest for the night. But, although utterly exhausted, they could not sleep. The idea that they stood at the gate of the new Eldorado kept them awake, feverish and impatient.

With the first rays of light they were on foot, and, driving the mules before them, were hastening through the gorge. It was more like a fissure, a crack in the ground enlarged by the action of rain, than it was like a ravine. It seemed as if some powerful commotion had rent in twain the rocks, whose smooth, perpendicular and inaccessible sides were scarcely more than a few yards assunder. Through these masses of stone ran, like serpents, long veins of that milky-white quartz which is the herald of the precious metal.

"It don't take half an eye to see that there is gold hereabouts," said Dominic, pointing to these glittering wavy lines.

"May be not," answered Penguin; "but we have n't found it yet. Gold is found among quartz, but it 's not every bed of quartz that contains gold"

As they left the river gradually behind, the road rose to the level of a narrow valley, which again descended, broadening to the northeast, as if to return to the Murrumbidgee.

Two hours after leaving the gum-trees, the travellers crossed this sort of neck or isthmus, and entered the

valley, walking along the bed of a dry stream. Upon the banks grew a profusion of thick, thorny briers, overtopped here and there by an occasional acacia, with scanty foliage and reddish flowers. Huge blocks of stone obstructed the bed of the brook.

The boys wondered how they should distinguish Bastien Moreau's big rock amid this picturesque chaos of stone. But their perplexity was of brief duration. They soon came to an enormous boulder, standing alone, which, lying across the stream, completely barred their progress. The water dammed up by this powerful obstacle probably formed a lovely cascade in the wet season; and even now, although it was the dry season, there was a little pool. This vast boulder was evidently the one mentioned by the gold-digger.

"We have been walking for more than two hours," exclaimed Daniel. "We must have reached the spot; for I see no other stone anywhere about us larger than this one."

"Well, let us look for the mine," said Dominic.

"Have a little patience," said Penguin. "Since we have undoubtedly reached the spot, let us pitch our tent beside this pool of water, unload our mules, which are exhausted by their clamber over the rocks, and rest ourselves."

"You are never in a hurry," said the angry sailor, who had gradually given up his obsequious politeness towards the Canadian.

"In the first place," returned the latter, "we are not sure of finding the mine immediately. In fact, we know that it is in the valley, but where? That is the question. So it is useless to hurry things."

Nevertheless, the sailor, leaving the boys to unload the mules and pitch the tent, began to hunt for the mine without further delay. He carefully explored the bushes on either shore for quite a distance around the rock; but after half an hour's search he returned without discovering anything.

Penguin could not help laughing at his look of discomfiture.

"Look here now, Dominic," he said, "if you stop to think a minute, you will see that Bastien Moreau would never have been such a fool as to leave his treasure exposed to the first adventurer who came along. He must have known that, just as he came upon it by mere chance, another might have the same luck. Before he left the valley, he undoubtedly concealed his shaft so carefully that he was not sure of finding it again himself, and thought it necessary to make a plan of his works."

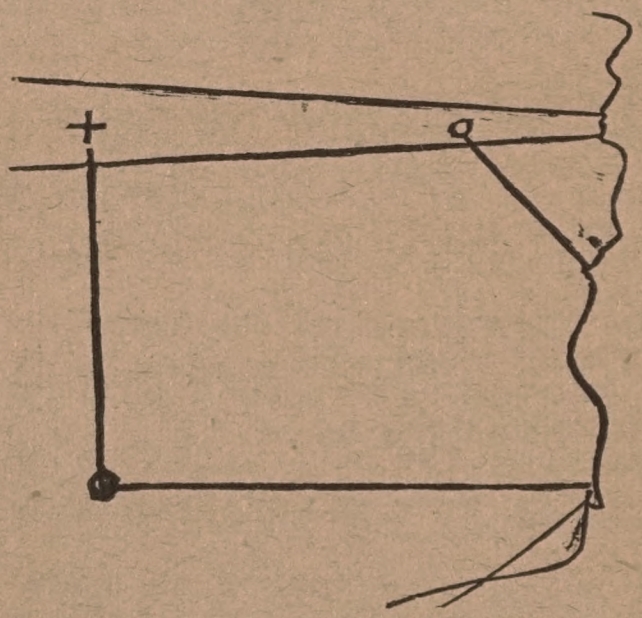
"Ah!" said the sailor, "and this plan?"

"This plan," the young Canadian coldly replied, "is in my bosom. It has never been off my person since the day that Daniel put it into my keeping."

And to Dominic's no small surprise, he took the scrap of paper from his bosom and spread it out on the rock,

carefully smoothing the folds as he did so. Daniel bent down to study it with him.

"We told you," continued Penguin, "that Bastien's memorandum was unluckily torn at the words, 'an enormous stone which marks —' A little further on there are, indeed, these fragmentary words 'which goes down 28 feet'; but this can only refer to the depth of the shaft. On the very edge of the paper we find another important guide, — a plan, also, unfortunately imperfect. Here it is: —



This sketch will probably guide us straight to the mine."

"Humph!" said Dominic, "if you trust to that —"

"Why, certainly," said Daniel, "we trust to that. I could n't make head or tail of it at first, but I think that Martial has found the key to the mystery."

"We shall soon see," Penguin replied. "In the first place, I suppose that the cross marked on the plan stands

for the great stone where we now are. It is very clear that the two lines on either side of it are meant for the stream, the bed of which widens in the same way. As I see a point marked in the narrowest portion of the water-course, I guess that the mine is up the river from the rock and on the left bank, as all the lines go in that direction. This agreed upon, I find another spot connected with the cross by a perpendicular line marked '28,' which must mean twenty-eight yards, twenty-eight paces, or twenty-eight feet. This point is, in my opinion, nothing but a guide, for it is connected with another and invisible point by a line marked '76.' This unknown point is undoubtedly the situation of the mine, for it is connected by another line, unfortunately incomplete, with the point in the bed of the stream. Is this clear?"

"I don't understand a blessed word," said Dominic, who was completely dumbfounded.

"I understand you perfectly," said Daniel, admiring his friend's ingenious explanation.

"I did not explain myself very clearly," said Penguin, "but I think I am right. At any rate, let us try my scheme; if it fails, we can easily follow some other."

The cabin boys had pitched their tent on the left bank of the river, not far from the big boulder.

"We will take this tent," he continued, "as our starting point. First, we must turn our backs on it. You, Dominic, must walk straight forward, counting your steps as

you go. Your legs are longer than mine and will give us a more exact measure."

"Let us take our tools with us," said Daniel; "we may need them."

The sailor turned his back to the tent and advanced in the desired direction. At the twenty-seventh step he was stopped by a great acacia, standing haughtily alone in the midst of the scanty underbrush.

"Good!" said the Canadian. "This tree undoubtedly represents the second point on the plan. Now we have only to count seventy-six paces, walking straight forward in a parallel line with the left bank of the river."

Without a word, Dominic resumed his march, Daniel counting the steps aloud. At the seventy-sixth, Penguin planted a stake in the ground.

"Well!" cried the sailor in a tone of discouragement, "where is the mine? I see nothing but stones and underbrush, and more stones, and not the least sign of a shaft. I very much fear that I have had my labor for my pains. What a fool I was to let two young monkeys lead me so far into the desert without a word of explanation!"

The Canadian said nothing. He was studying Bastien's plan, occasionally glancing around.

"Bless my heart!" said Dominic, giving way to his temper, "this is too much. There you both stand like statues, as if this was the most natural thing in the world. I warn you that, if you have been fooling me, I will be fully revenged on you."

"Do let us alone!" cried Daniel. "Don't you see that Martial knows what he is talking about?"

"Yes," said the Canadian, "I am convinced that the mine must be here, perhaps under our very feet, but at any rate somewhere close by. Stop, look yonder, towards the river. See that dead tree lying on the ground. I'm willing to bet that that is our fourth point. Therefore the mine must be here. We have our picks. To work! Let us dig around the stake. We shall have time enough to grumble afterwards if we find nothing."

Armed with their picks, the three began to turn up the soil about them. Several hours passed and brought no result. The workers were forced to stop and rest, and Daniel ran to the tent for food to revive their failing strength.

Dominic sat silently and gloomily on a pile of stones gathered together by some flood. He had lighted his pipe and was lost in thought; but the movements of the pick which he held, betrayed the dull rage which brooded in his heart. The heavy iron tool, involuntarily lifted, struck sparks from the pebbles upon which it fell.

Penguin sat near the sailor, looking coldly at him and eating a biscuit.

"There'll be a row before long," he whispered to Daniel, who was close by. "Your dear friend Martigues don't strike me as a very patient man, and I —"

He stopped suddenly, sprang up, and before Dominic had time to resist, he snatched the pick from his hand and

began to throw up the earth hastily. At the same time he shouted:

"Here it is! We have hit it!"

"What do you mean?" asked the brutal sailor.

"I mean that instead of quarrelling, you had better go to work. You are sitting on the mine."

"How can that be?" said Daniel.

"Look here," said the Canadian. "Do you see this piece of wood?"

"Yes!" cried both his companions at once.

"Well, that is the top of one of the planks with which Bastien closed the mouth of his shaft. This he has covered in turn with earth and stones, and that is why we did not notice it before."

A few vigorous strokes of the pick uncovered a part of the wood, and almost immediately they heard the noise of pebbles dropping down into the pit through the cracks in this roofing.

There could be no further doubt. Dominic himself could not restrain his joy. He embraced the French boy again and again; then, somewhat shamefacedly, he offered his hand to Penguin, saying:

"I hope you won't bear me a grudge."

"Why should I blame you for being impatient?" said the Canadian. "To work, to work!"

Active and industrious as the laborers were, it was a long and difficult task. Night was at hand when, the



"All the cracking in the world could not frighten Dominic, who went cautiously down, lamp in hand." — Page 297.

earth being removed, the planks could be taken away in turn. The mouth of the pit gaped black and wide.

"It is too late to do anything more to-day," said Daniel.

But Dominic did not agree to this. He wanted to go down into the mine, to assure himself of the reality of the treasure which lay below. He ran to the tent and came back with ropes and a lamp. Having lighted the lamp, he explored the mouth of the shaft, and uttered a cry of delight when he saw at his feet the top rounds of a long ladder, the end of which was lost in the darkness beneath.

"Your friend Bastien," said he to Daniel, "was polite enough to leave his staircase standing. This will do away with the need of ropes and be both safer and more convenient."

The ladder, made of gum-tree wood, seemed very unsteady, and began to crack in alarming fashion as the sailor stepped upon it; but all the cracking in the world could not frighten Dominic, who went cautiously down, lamp in hand. Reaching the bottom safely, he called to the two boys, who slid down the ladder, and stood beside him in the twinkling of an eye.

The excavation, which was nine feet wide at the top, was conical in shape, going down about thirty feet and being only about six feet wide at the base. This pit, dug in stony soil, must have cost Bastien Moreau and his friends long weeks of work. However, under the layer of rocks was a more mellow soil, dripping with dampness,

which had accumulated and formed a shallow pond on the bottom of the mine. Beyond this shaft a lateral gallery went about twenty paces into the earth; the walls of this narrow passage were propped up with planks and tree-trunks.

The three friends went into this gallery. They examined it carefully to the end by the light of their lamp, but found no sign of a vein. A block of glittering white quartz blocked further progress, and promised to prove a poser to any one who tried to pierce it.

The impetuous Daniel was somewhat disappointed; he had expected to find bars of gold at the bottom of the mine, heaped up and ready for removal. Dominic, who had worked in mines before, was more reasonable and only said: —

"We shall have some good, hard work with our picks before we find our treasure."

"Yes," said Penguin; "so the best thing we can do now is to go to bed. For my part, I am too tired to lift a hand."

They accordingly left the mine and returned to their tent, where, after feeding their mules, they fell asleep side by side, and were all soon plunged in golden dreams.

At the first peep of day they went down into the mine again with their tools and set to work. The block of quartz resisted all their efforts; at the end of the day, they had only advanced a few inches.

"It is impossible for us to keep on in this way," said

Penguin. "Our tools will be blunted on this rock, which is harder than steel. We must use gunpowder and blow it up."

"To be sure," said the sailor. "I thought of that, and we have plenty of powder, for I brought a supply in case we we should need it. But we must use it very carefully, or else we shall bring the gallery down with it and have the whole thing to do over again."

They therefore tried using powder, and succeeded in blasting away the greater part of the quartz boulder. This perilous task took three days; but on the fourth, being rid of the obstacle, they came upon a repository of loose earth and stone rubbish, which yielded readily to the pick, and through which they advanced rapidly. They then encountered a fresh difficulty: the walls of the gallery hewn from this crumbling soil, threatened to cave in; they were obliged to prop them up with the few planks which they could find and with the trunks of trees which they cut down. Moreover, after a little, water began to pour freely in upon them; the mine was in danger of being flooded.

The workers were therefore obliged to make a division of labor: while two of them dug away at the rock, the third, remaining above ground, bailed out the water with a bucket fastened to a long rope. Every morning, before they went to work, each one had to take a turn at this disagreeable task, for the water stood more than two feet deep in the mine.

And still, at the end of a fortnight, they had not found a single particle of gold to reward them for all their labor.

Dominic grumbled loudly.

One day he said: "Perhaps Bastien Moreau only left the mine because he was sure that there was nothing more in it."

"Perhaps so," was Penguin's phlegmatic reply. "But we can't help it, can we? You must acknowledge that yourself."

Daniel was the most eager and persevering of all. He was never discouraged or depressed and he worked incessantly, although his comrades often stopped for a few minutes at a time to rest.

One morning he went down into the mine without waiting to draw off the water which had collected during the night, and knee-deep in sticky, wet clay, he made a furious attack upon the rock. The fragments flew thick and fast in every direction, splashing him with mud, but he kept on undaunted.

But suddenly his arm dropped to his side. He turned pale and almost fainted. The lamplight, falling on the spot where he was working, lighted up a small, yellow, glittering lump, embedded in a piece of quartz.

With a trembling hand the young man took down the lamp and held it close to the shining lump.

It was really gold and nothing else. Daniel stood rooted to the spot, gazing at the fascinating metal.

"Gold!" he murmured in a low voice.

Then, tearing the nugget from the quartz with one bold stroke, he rushed from the gallery like a madman.

"Martial! Dominic!" he shouted, holding up the precious fragment, "gold! gold!"

At the sound of these magical words the sailor ran hastily down the ladder, quickly followed by Penguin.

The stroke of Daniel's pick had broken the spell. The golden vein, Bastien's treasure, was found once more. That night when the three adventurers, worn out with fatigue and emotion, returned to their tent, they brought up from the mine four large nuggets and a great many smaller ones, representing in all more than three hundred dollars in gold, — quite a fortune.



"He held out his hand to Daniel."

CHAPTER XXIII.

EXPIATION.

For two days the gold-diggers continued to take so many nuggets from the vein of quartz that Dominic became seriously alarmed as to how they were to carry off such a heavy load.

"What a pity," he said, "that we did not bring a third mule along! Even if we leave our tools behind, our two animals can scarcely carry the gold which we have already dug up, and food enough to take us across the desert."

"It is very unfortunate," replied the Canadian; "but there is nothing to prevent us from following Bastien

Moreau's example. Let us cover over the mouth of the mine before we go, and then we can come back again after we have deposited our gold safely in the Melbourne bank."

Daniel was dazzled by his sudden access to riches and was rather sorry that he could not keep the money.

"If it were not for Martial," thought he, "I should divide this gold with Dominic. Half of it would make me rich. How all the people of Castel would stare to see me come home laden with treasure! First of all, I would make my father leave his old shanty; we would settle down in a beautiful country house, near some large city, Perpignan, for instance. But Martial is right: this treasure does not belong to me. After all, if Bastien had not trusted me with his portfolio, I should never have managed to find this wonderful gold mine, even if it had ever occurred to me to come and try my luck in Australia. How rich Mrs. Moreau will be! But if we don't find her, in spite of all our searching, I don't see why this treasure would n't belong to us."

The fact of the matter was that the sight of so much gold began to exercise its fatal spell over Daniel's vacillating spirit. The youth, but recently so proud of the good resolves inspired by Penguin, felt evil thoughts creeping rapidly over him. It must be said to his praise that he fought nobly against them, and that the Canadian never suspected the struggle which poor Daniel was making against constant temptation.

Dominic made no effort to disguise his frantic joy or his avaricious greed. Sitting in the tent at night, after the day's work was done, he delighted to plunge his hands deep down into the chest of glittering lumps. His eyes shone as if illuminated by a reflection from the bright metal, and, letting his favorite pipe go out in his mouth, he muttered over and over again:

"If all this gold were only mine!"

On the tenth day the laborers only found a few tiny nuggets; then on the succeeding days all trace of gold vanished. For a whole week they kept up their arduous task unceasingly, but did not find a single particle of gold.

"Evidently," said Penguin, "we have reached the end of the vein. Even the quartz has ceased. We shall find no more gold here."

"Well, let us try one of the gallery walls," said the insatiate Dominic.

"We had better go back to Melbourne; the rather," remarked the Canadian, "that our provisions are falling short. Have n't we gold enough? I calculated yesterday that we had nearly a million dollars."

"That only makes three hundred and fifty thousand for me!" angrily exclaimed the sailor.

"Indeed, only that!" said Daniel satirically. "I pity you, and I don't see why you don't claim damages and interest."

"It's no joking matter," said Dominic. "What I have is not enough for me, that's all there is to be said about it. We will not leave this spot until I am perfectly ready to go."

"You are not our master," exclaimed Penguin; "we shall go when we choose."

"Come, come," interrupted Daniel, "don't let us quarrel about nothing. We will make an attempt to dig another gallery. If we find no gold within a week, we will abandon the mine and return to Melbourne. Is it a bargain?"

"I agree!" grumbled Dominic.

The miners accordingly began to make a gallery running at right angles from the one where they had found the rich bearing. Several times their work was cut short by running springs, which they had to stop up for fear of flooding the mine. But the water flowed in faster than ever, so that Dominic had to stand at the top all day and fight the stream with buckets.

The week drew to a close; not a bit of gold had come to light. Penguin, suggested several times that they should give up their task as hopeless, but the sailor stuck to the bargain. At last the appointed day arrived, and, although greatly discouraged, the boys went down into the mine.

After four hours of persistent work Daniel exclaimed: —

"I swear, I've had enough of it. We are not galley slaves that Dominic should insist on working us so terribly hard to no purpose."

"The fact of the matter is," said Penguin, "that there is no more gold here. Let us be off."

And, throwing their picks over their shoulders, they left the gallery. On reaching the shaft they were greatly surprised to find that the ladder was gone, by which they usually entered and left the mine.

"It's one of Dominic's stupid jokes," said Penguin. "He thinks that he can keep us at work here till night."

"He can't mean to make us go without breakfast," said Daniel. And he called the sailor.

His shouts were unanswered for some time. The boys lost patience and shrieked and screamed. At last a shadow passed across the opening, and the sailor appeared at the edge of the pit. His malicious face wore so ferocious a look that Daniel fairly shivered.

"Well," cried the scoundrel, in a rough voice, "what ails you that you make such a noise down there?"

"Have done with your jokes," said the Canadian, "and let down the ladder. We want to come up."

"In the first place, Mr. Penguin," was the satirical reply, "I must ask you to be a little more polite. You say you want to come up: I've nothing to say against it."

"Come, Martigues," said Daniel, with a forced laugh, "be reasonable. We've been working a whole week now to please you. We have found nothing, but we can't help that. I assure you that there is no more gold here. Hand us down the ladder."

Dominic sneered.

"I 'm very sorry, Master Daniel," he said, "that you got into such bad company on board the Atlanta. But I wash my hands of you, and leave you with your dear Penguin. I have just received a letter summoning me to Melbourne in all haste. I 'm in a great hurry, and have no time to waste on you. But you may depend upon it, I will come back as soon as possible to see that you have n't been too unhappy together in my absence. Don't quarrel, will you? Good-by!"

And the sailor made a pretence of leaving them.

"Dominic! Martigues!" shouted the two boys.

The rascal reappeared.

"Oh! I forgot," he said; and he burst into a horrid laugh. "Look in the portfolio," he shouted to Daniel. "Perhaps you will find Mrs. Moreau's address. No? Well, I will try to hunt the good lady up, and I will give her all sorts of tender messages from you."

"Wretch!" cried Penguin, who now perceived the sailor's abominable plan.

"What?" cried the ruffian; and, drawing his revolver, he took aim at the boy, who never stirred. But after glaring at him for a moment, he dropped his weapon, saying: "No, it will be much more amusing to leave you both down there. Good-by!"

And he vanished for the last time, for the poor boys heard his steps die away in the distance. They were alone,

with no hope of rescue, at the bottom of a shaft thirty feet deep.

Up to the very last moment, Daniel took it for a very bad joke on Dominic's part. But when he found how abominably the villain had trapped them, he sat down on the muddy ground and began to cry. Penguin, pale, with clenched fists, stood manfully erect, already striving with irrepressible energy, to hit upon some means of escape from the pit where they were condemned to die of hunger.

"This time," sobbed Daniel, "we are lost indeed. Why has Providence preserved us so often, merely to meet with such an awful fate?"

"Have n't I frequently told you," gravely responded the young Canadian, "that it is cowardly to yield to despair, which only lowers a man, and leads him more surely to his ruin?"

"Martial, how happy you are never to lose that innate hope which sustains you, and helps you to surmount every danger! And to think that it was I who dragged you down with me into this living tomb! I am punished for all my sins. Bastien's last words are confirmed. 'In this life,' said the dying man, 'good intentions are nothing, actions only avail, and the wicked are always punished.' Once before, I yielded to that Dominic's treacherous advice, and violated the secret which was confided to me; and then again I was deaf to your counsels, and listened to the wretch who has condemned us both to the

most frightful tortures! But is it just that an innocent fellow, like you, should expiate my crimes? I would give my gold, my life, to that devil, to save your life. Oh, how miserable I am!" And he began to sob piteously.

"Come, Daniel, be calm," said his comrade gently. "The punishment seems to be disproportionate to your faults, which must have been long since forgiven. Those are the true criminals who, taking advantage of your inexperience and the very generosity of your heart, led you astray. They alone deserve to expiate their crimes; and we must escape from this prison, if only to deal out justice to them."

"Escape?" muttered Daniel. "You cannot hope to pierce these stone walls?"

"No, it would take too long to work a gallery through this enormous mass of earth; besides, our strength would soon give out without food. We must find some other plan. Come, Daniel, get up; have courage! If we must die, don't let us yield without a struggle."

The young Frenchman, as if electrified by these brave words, sprang to his feet, and threw his arms around his friend's neck, exclaiming: —

"Here I am, Martial. I am ready. See, my tears are dried!"

Penguin returned his embrace, saying: —

"First, let us try to break away some of the planks which wainscot the gallery. Perhaps we can build a

scaffolding with them high enough to climb out of the mine."

A few strokes of their picks provided them with a number of boards, which they joined together to a height of nine feet; but it was impossible for them to raise it any higher. Every time they tried to add a second story of planks, the whole mass tumbled about their heads. Once they narrowly escaped being buried under the boards, and were both severely bruised.

"We must try something else," said Penguin finally. "We shall never succeed in this way. If we only had some nails! But I have not found one in the whole of this woodwork, which is merely mortised together."

Meanwhile night overtook them, and darkness added to the agony of their situation. Worn out with work, having eaten nothing since the previous day, the two boys were still obliged to remain on their feet; for the ground had changed to a mass of liquid mud. However, they contrived to make a sort of raft of the boards, upon which they stretched themselves.

The stars shone overhead with a splendor rendered more dazzling by the fact that the pit formed a sort of gigantic telescope. But towards midnight the sky clouded over, large drops of rain began to fall on their faces, and forced them to seek shelter in the gallery. Soon the hurricane burst upon them, and a perfect deluge poured into the mine.

The water grew higher and higher. At the end of an hour the boys were knee-deep in it. They stood silently shivering, overwhelmed by the successive blows levelled at them by a cruel fate.

"We shall be drowned!" cried Daniel. "The water has reached my waist."

"Drowned!" repeated Penguin, as if suddenly struck by the word. "Drowned!"

Then he exclaimed: —

"Take your pick, Daniel, and follow me. We may yet be saved."

With these words, he rushed farther into the gallery. Daniel felt his way slowly after him.

On reaching the spot where they had been working the day before, they found the lamp still hanging to the wall, and giving out a feeble light. Penguin studied the rock carefully, and in a few moments discovered one of the springs which they had stopped up. He at once dealt it a few vigorous blows, and the water gushed forth in a tiny stream.

"Do as I do," he said to Daniel. "We must make a broad bed for the stream."

"But — ?" asked the amazed French boy.

"Work with a will. I have no time for explanations now?"

The two lads set eagerly about cutting away the wall. The water poured in more abundantly. A few additional

strokes, and the liquid sheet, finding a large outlet, burst forth with such force that Daniel came near being knocked down.

"Now, run!" cried the Canadian; and, snatching up the lamp, he fled from the gallery, which the water filled with fearful speed.

At last they reached the pit. The torrent, for which they had opened a way, rushed furiously after them. In an instant the water rose breast-high.

Penguin seized two broad boards; and taking off his belt, he tied them together with a loose knot, sufficiently firm, however, to prevent them from floating apart.

"Do you understand now?" he said to Daniel. "Get astride these planks."

"I understand," replied his comrade, hauling himself upon the impromptu raft. "But do you hope that the water will raise us to the mouth of the pit?"

"I think it will," said the Canadian. "The spring which we have just set free must be fed by the waters of the great plain that overlooks the valley, in which case it will play the part of an artesian well. The water will seek to rise to its own level, and, finding no other outlet, will rise to the mouth of this rocky pit, or well."

The clever boy's hypothesis was correct. The water rapidly filled the pit. The entrance to the gallery was already covered, and the foaming whirlpool rose ever higher and higher.

At daybreak the raft, with the loose planks and posts which the water brought up with it, was scarcely nine feet distant from the mouth of the shaft; but at this point the torrent paused. From this point upwards the rock gave place to earth; and the water, soaking into the damp soil, trickled away imperceptibly.

Penguin soon discovered this fact. The case became a puzzling one. This time it was left for Daniel to solve the riddle. Dominic, in his hasty flight, had neglected to pull up the post driven down into the shaft to hold the ropes for the buckets with which the water was bailed out. The young Frenchman took off his long woollen sash, and, carefully balancing himself on the unsteady raft, skilfully threw it around the post. One end fell close beside him. He fastened it to the other end, which he held in his hand; and, turning to Penguin, who was watching him curiously, he said, "You shall go up first."

Without a word, the Canadian climbed hand over hand along this impromptu rope, and reached the post. Then he stopped, turned, and held out his hand to help Daniel after him.

A moment after, the boys, clasped in each other's arms, offered their grateful thanks to Heaven, which had snatched them from death once more.

Their first glance was directed to the place where their camp had stood, near the "big boulder." What was their surprise to see that the tent was still there! They ran towards it.

Eager to escape, and anxious to cross the desert as quickly as possible, Dominic had piled gold and provisions upon one mule, and mounted the other himself. He was therefore obliged to leave behind, not only the tools, but also the shelter-tent, and, what was still more important to the poor castaways, a certain amount of food.

The boys were therefore able to refresh themselves with a good meal of bacon and boiled rice. Then they lay down in the tent to enjoy the rest which they needed so much after twenty-four hours of keenest agony and incessant toil.

When they awoke the sun had travelled once round the entire earth. Nothing detained them longer in the melancholy valley whither they came to seek their fortune; so, loading themselves with all the food that they could carry, they turned back with heavy hearts.

Having crossed the Murray, they came upon the desert. How awful and how desolate the vast, bare plains, with their glittering lagoons, appeared to them! The first time that they traversed them an indescribable ardor kept up their courage; they seemed to see beyond the barren waste the magic goal toward which they were hastening: while now they dragged themselves wearily over the scorching sand, bringing nothing back from their expedition but sorrow and discouragement.

Poor Daniel! all his fair dreams of the future had flown. After a momentary glimpse, if not of wealth, at least of

peace and happiness, — for he naturally thought that Mrs. Moreau would not let their devotion go unrewarded, — he must return to his toilsome life as a sailor, and bid farewell forever to such castles in the air. Luckily, Bastien's portfolio had escaped Dominic's greed. Perhaps some day the French boy might fulfil the mission confided to him. This was his one consolation amid all his bitter woes.

Unfortunately, the rascally thief had carried off the map given by the consul to the boys, who, deprived of this indispensable guide, wandered blindly through these vast solitudes, unable to tell whether their journey's end were approaching or not.

Their joy may accordingly be imagined when they came across some footprints in the sand, one day. On examining the deep impressions, they easily recognized the hoof-marks of two heavily loaded mules. Dominic had undoubtedly passed that way; but, what was still more surprising, he must have gone by very recently, scarcely a day since. How did it happen that the thief, who was well mounted and had two days the start of his victims, had made no greater progress? This greatly perplexed the boys. Still, whether these were the footprints of Dominic or of some other traveller, they decided to follow them, feeling sure that they would lead to some inhabited place.

The truth was that the thief had lost his way, being

anything but familiar with the use of a map. In his mad haste he fled southwards, and reached the mountains; but he discovered his mistake when he saw that there was no pass across this rocky wall. Overcome with terror, fearing that his food would give out in the desert, he turned eastward again as quickly as his tired mules could travel, and it was only the night before that he had crossed the point in the road which the boys had just reached.

They now followed his track, and before long, by certain unmistakable signs, were assured that they were close upon the fugitive.

"I am sure," said Penguin, stirring up a pile of smouldering ashes with his stick, "that the villain can't be far off. He must have passed the night on this very spot, and cannot be many hours in advance of us."

"What shall we do," asked Daniel, "if we catch up with him?"

"We must beware of letting him see us," said the Canadian. "He took care to carry off all our weapons, and I know that if he saw us, he would not hesitate to shoot us down like dogs. If he did not do so at the mine, it was only because, in his savage cruelty, he thought that he had condemned us to a far more horrible death. We shall therefore do well to follow him at a distance; and as soon as we get into civilized regions, we will hand him over to the police."

"Who are not to be laughed at in this country," said

Daniel. "For I was told at Melbourne that robbers convicted of stealing from a miner were hung without further legal form. But, in spite of this severity, it seems that in mining districts there are almost as many thieves as there are honest workers."

Night fell, and the travellers had not seen hide or hair of Dominic. The rolling nature of the ground prevented them from seeing more than a short distance before them. The aspect of the country had completely changed. The ground was covered with thick, emerald-green turf, watered by fresh rivulets, and fine trees stood here and there in ever-increasing numbers.

"Come," said Penguin, as he saw the sun rise upon this smiling scene, "I really believe we've got over the worst part of our journey. We must be near some farm."

Encouraged by this hope, the boys resumed their march. After fording a pretty little river they climbed a high hill; and from the top, where they stopped to rest, they gazed over a broad, grassy plain, sprinkled with beautiful groups of green trees, and stretching onward to a line of ragged mountain-peaks in the dim, blue distance. A few miles off they distinctly saw a group of houses, with thickly thatched roofs and wide piazzas.

"What did I tell you?" said Penguin, pointing to them. "In a couple of hours we shall be out of danger."

"Yes," said Daniel, "and Dominic will be nicely surprised to find us on his heels."

"To be sure. We shall probably meet him at that farm, where he will have to stop as well as ourselves. The wretch! cowardly as he is cruel, he will shudder at our approach. But he will find no pity. The country must be rid of such a monster."

As they talked, they descended the steep slope of the hill, the foot of which was covered with thickets of dwarf acacias and gum-trees. A path, evidently formed by human agency, wound along through the underbrush.

Daniel, who walked first, suddenly uttered a cry of surprise. He stooped and picked up a scrap of fur, which he showed to Penguin.

"What have you found?" asked the Canadian.

"What! don't you recognize Dominic's fur cap?"

"Of course, but what a state it is in! Good heavens! it is torn to tatters. Only look, I do believe it is covered with blood."

The lads did not know what to think of this treasure trove. It was indeed the thief's constant head-covering. But how had he lost it? Whence came the bloody stains?

Looking around him, Penguin soon discovered that the ground bore marks of numerous footsteps, mingled with which were the marks of horseshoes. Here and there lay shreds and fragments of cloth, half covered with earth. The neighboring shrubs were heavily sprinkled with blood in places. Everything testified to a violent, desperate fight, of which this path had been the scene.

Stirred by a strange presentiment, Daniel searched the thicket by the roadside. All at once his companion heard him shout: —

"Martial, I have found him!"

The Canadian flew to meet him.

At Daniel's feet lay Dominic's corpse, flat on its back, the face turned up, and disfigured by an awful, bloody wound, running from ear to ear.

Dumb with horror, the two cabin boys stood staring at the unfortunate man. How did he die? What unhallowed hand had arrested the fugitive in his flight and snatched his treasure from him? What assassin had judged this criminal?

In the generosity of their hearts, the boys had already forgotten the harm that Martigues had done them. The sight of this corpse stifled their wrath, and they cursed the mysterious hand that had destroyed their enemy.

Suddenly a slight convulsion passed over the villanous face. His right arm was raised as if imploring mercy.

"He lives!" cried Daniel.

Without an instant's hesitation, the French boy bent over Dominic and lifted him in his arms. Penguin ran to a neighboring brook, and soon returning with a cup full of water, bathed the wounded man's face with a wet cloth.

The fresh, cool water seemed to revive the poor wretch. His lips half opened and a feeble sigh escaped. With infinite care the boys raised him from the ground, and, carry-

ing him out of the thicket, propped him against a tree by the roadside.

At last Dominic slowly opened his eyes. His glance, wandering at first, quickly fell upon the sympathetic faces of the two boys. Then, as if struck by lightning, he sprang to his feet, stretched out his arms as if to drive away the frightful vision, and exclaimed in a terrible voice: "Daniel! Penguin!" Then falling to the ground, he expired with a hoarse cry, his mouth filled with bloody foam.



"The two friends were surrounded by horsemen."

CHAPTER XXIV.

BEFORE THE SHERIFF.

STARTLED and awed by this tragic end, the boys silently gazed at the luckless Dominic's distorted corpse.

"His punishment was speedy," murmured Daniel. "The poor fellow was struck down just as he thought he had reached the topmost aim of his miserable ambition. But who can have killed him?"

"It was the hand of God," said Penguin solemnly.

"Yes, of course," said the French boy, "the punishment

was too startling not to be a fearful warning. But some human agency must have been employed."

"Probably it was one of those desert marauders of whom we were speaking the other day. Who knows whether Dominic did not stumble into some trap which he had prepared for us? Perhaps, when he left Melbourne, he arranged with one of his worthy comrades to strip us on our return. He did not foresee that he could rob us so easily unaided and alone, and, in his turn, may have been sacrificed by his accomplices."

The Canadian had hardly uttered these words when the earth shook beneath the feet of galloping horses, and in the twinkling of an eye our two friends were surrounded by a body of horsemen armed with revolvers, who rushed upon them. All resistance was vain. The boys, guessing that they were in the power of Dominic's murderers, allowed themselves to be seized savagely by the collar. Two of the horsemen dismounted, and fastening the prisoners by a long rope tied round their wrists, mounted again, and ordered them to follow after, lavishing upon them all the insulting terms in which the English language is so rich.

Penguin tried to protest.

"Why do you take us prisoners?" said he to one of the men. "I assure you that you won't find a particle of gold in our pockets."

"That makes no difference to us, and won't alter what

you have done," replied the rider. "Come, walk along, jail-birds!"

"You deserve hanging far more than we do," angrily cried Daniel; but his imprudent answer only brought him a smart cut across his back from a whip; and the men putting the horses into a trot, the poor boys had to run fast to escape being dragged over the ground or trodden under the horses' feet.

In fifteen minutes the party turned into a vast meadow, studded with groups of trees, in the midst of which browsed a great herd of fat cattle with long horns. At the end of the meadow stood the many buildings of a European farm, in front of which stood a crowd of men, whose cries and howls were heard distinctly at this distance.

Undoubtedly the appearance of the party had been signalled; for the prisoners saw a man on horseback leave the crowd and ride rapidly towards them. In a very few moments he traversed the space which divided them; and as soon as he was within ear-shot he stopped his horse, and shouted: —

"Well! Is there any news?"

"You were right, Mr. Richard," said one of the men, respectfully removing his hat: "the robber was not alone. We saw two of his accomplices this morning on the hill-top. They were doubtless looking for their leader; but we took them by surprise, just as they were audaciously

searching the poor miner's pockets. Here they are, — two mere children." And, turning his horse aside, he pointed out the prisoners.

The man's words were like a flash of light to Penguin. So the men about them were not robbers, but only angry colonists, who suspected them — Daniel and himself — to be the accomplices of Dominic's murderer. Instantly taking advantage of this discovery, he stepped forward as far as the rope which bound him allowed, and, addressing the person whom the horseman had called Mr. Richard, he exclaimed: —

"It is a mistake, sir. We are innocent of any crime. We have ourselves been —"

But one of the impromptu police cut short his speech. Giving a quick jerk to the rope, he threw him down, crying: —

"Hold your tongue, you scamp, or I 'll send a bullet through your brains."

"Don't be unnecessarily brutal with those boys, John," cried Mr. Richard. "I have already informed the sheriff of French Creek of what has occurred, and he is now trying the rascal whom we caught yesterday. Your two prisoners will be taken before him directly, and he will try them in their turn."

So saying, the colonist wheeled his horse and galloped back to the farm.

"The sheriff!" grunted John. "What is he good for in

such a case? There is but one judge for highway robbers, and that's Judge Lynch."

"Don't be distressed!" said a fellow-rider, with a laugh. "Mr. Martin, the new sheriff, is quite as clever as Judge Lynch. As the richest land-owner in the valley, he is more interested than any of us in ridding the country of vagabonds and marauders, and these fellows can make their minds up to swing: the sheriff will not disappoint them."

A few moments later the little party reached the farm. The prisoners were surrounded by a threatening mob, and Mr. Richard was again obliged to interfere, and prevent the furious crowd from executing summary justice. By the sheriff's orders, the boys were locked up in a neighboring stable to await their trial.

"After all," said Penguin cheerfully, "although these fine fellows handled me rather roughly, I should much rather fall into their hands than into those of the highwaymen."

"Yes," said Daniel; "I too thought at first that we were captured by brigands; but the fine fellows, as you call them, who clapped us into prison here, might have let us explain the matter without treating us so savagely. My shoulders still ache with the slashing of one of their whips."

"What else could you expect?" was the philosophic reply. "Those are the little accidents of life. They took us for robbers, and treated us as such. But it will be

perfectly simple for us to explain the situation to the sheriff, and I am sure that those who treated us so rudely will be the very first to apologize to us. Stay! I hear approaching footsteps. They have come for us."

The stable-door opened, and John appeared.

"Come along, you brats!" he cried in a rough voice. "It's your turn next."

The prisoners rose and followed him, without a word.

The court was held in the open air, hard by the farm, beneath a huge gum-tree, whose great branches seemed strong enough to bear the weight of every robber in the country. The sheriff, Mr. Martin, presided, seated in a common straw chair, behind a table upon which lay the only paraphernalia of this primitive form of justice, — a Bible to swear the prisoners by, and a code of laws. The terrible judge, a man in the prime of life, looked so gentle and benevolent, in spite of his tawny beard, that the boys felt quite reassured at the sight of him. They therefore stepped boldly up to him, and, bowing respectfully, awaited his questions.

"You are accused," said the sheriff gravely, "of having shared in the murder of an unfortunate miner, and of having maliciously robbed him of the honest fruits of his labor."

"My comrade and I are both entirely innocent of the crime," replied Penguin firmly.

"Still," said the judge, "you cannot deny that you were

found on the very spot where it was committed. The men who surprised you there had been watching you for some time. They saw you from a distance as you approached your victim, doubtless to make sure that your work was fully done — "

"All this," eagerly interrupted Daniel, "is but a fatal concurrence of circumstances. We left Melbourne, two months ago, in company with the very man so foully murdered. We went with him in search of a rich placer, whose existence was accidentally revealed to us. There, somewhere near the Murray and the Murrumbidgee, by unexpected good luck, we discovered a large amount of gold, and we intended returning to Melbourne at once, when our companion succeeded in luring us into a trap, and ran off, carrying all the products of our common toil. Saved by a miracle, we were coming hither, utterly destitute, when, this morning, what was our horror and dismay to find the corpse of our treacherous comrade stretched across our path. But he was not quite dead. Forgetting our anger, we tried to help him ; but the poor fellow only opened his eyes long enough to recognize us, and died with a curse on his lips. At that moment we were taken prisoners by the colonists."

Daniel's voice had such an accent of truth in it that the sheriff, who had listened attentively, asked him more gently : —

"What was your unfortunate comrade's name ?"

"Dominic Martigues. He was a sailor, from the port of Marseilles."

"You are French?"

"Yes, sir; and my friend here is a Canadian."

"Strange!" muttered the sheriff. Then he added: —

"Do you know this man?"

The boys turned their heads in the direction to which he pointed, and saw the chief prisoner, hitherto hidden from them by the crowd.

The murderer, bound hand and foot, sat beneath the tree, a rope around his neck, one end of which was already tied to a branch. He was a short, squat fellow, with a dark face and thick, black beard. His eyes betrayed the impotent rage which swelled his breast. He had listened coldly to the examination of his pretended accomplices; but, as the boys turned towards him, his face was lit up with a triumphant smile.

Penguin stepped forward, and in a firm voice, said: —

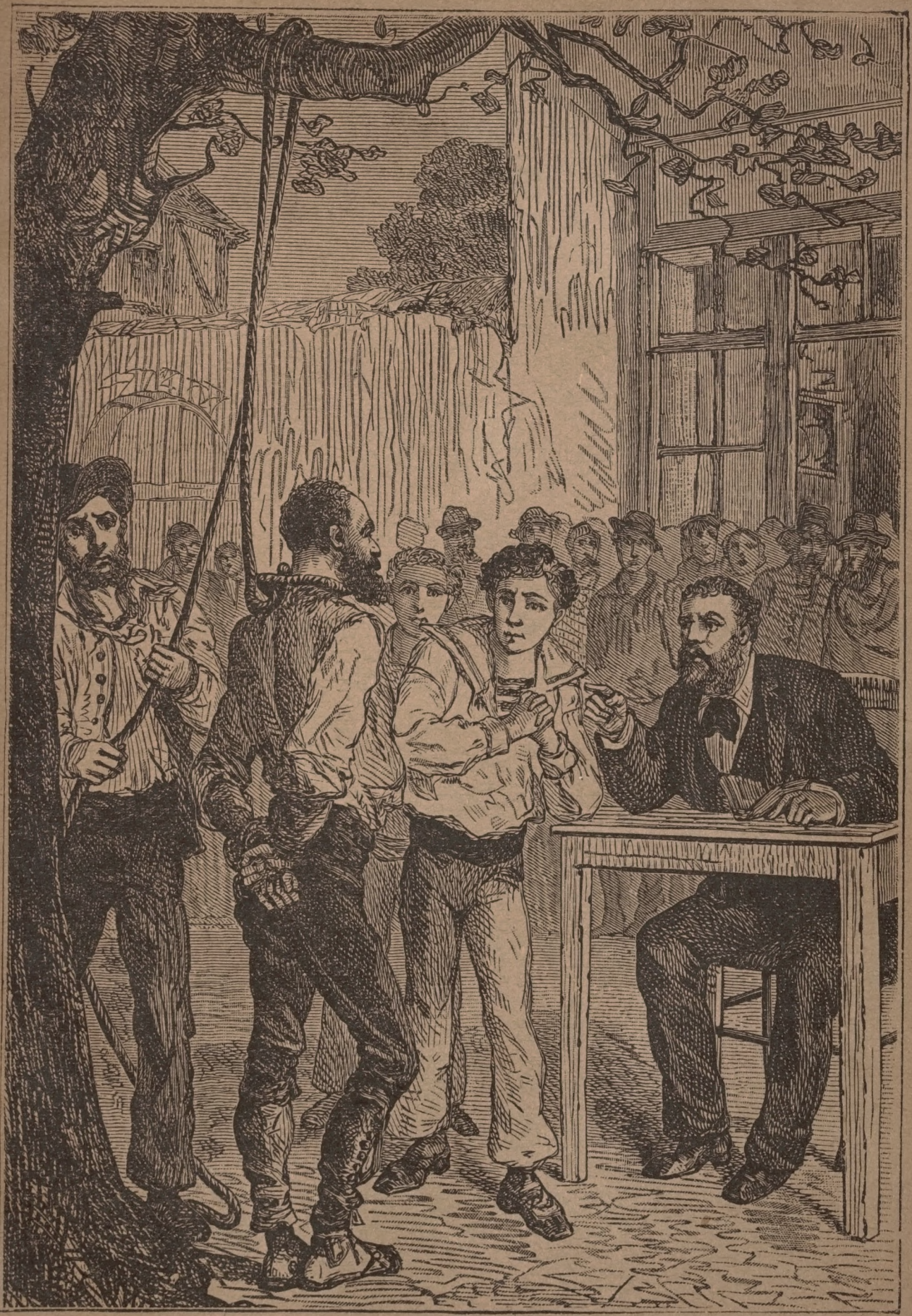
"I never saw the man before."

As for Daniel, the sight of the murderer seemed to turn him to stone. He turned pale, stammered out a few words, and dropped his head in shame and alarm.

All this did not escape the quick eye of the judge, who, turning to the French boy, continued slowly: —

"And you, do you know this man?"

Daniel was mute. Penguin, surprised, urged his friend to answer. Suddenly the prisoner exclaimed: —



"Do you know this man?" — Page 328.

"Well, Daniel, is that the way you deny your friends? Don't you remember Mateo Puig? You must have a precious poor memory. And yet we've done more than one good job together."

The sheriff looked attentively at the boy, and then said sternly: —

"Speak! Is what this man says true?"

"Yes, sir," replied Daniel, utterly crushed.

"Go on," said the judge.

"What the man says may be true," cried Penguin. "My friend certainly knew him in earlier days; he was foolishly led into mischief by him, but I swear before God, before all these honest people, and on my honor, that he is as innocent as I am of the crime recently committed here, that since we were wrecked on these shores he has never seen the rascal, and that all that he told you just now was the truth and nothing but the truth."

The young Canadian, fired by his friendship, put such ardor into his pleading that the crowd was touched, and began to applaud.

The sheriff, too, shared in the general emotion.

"Take these lads back to prison," said he to John. "I will examine them more at my leisure presently."

They were led away.

"Daniel Riva," cried the robber, "when you go back to Castel, tell the people that I died like a hero to restore to you the fortune which another deprived you of."

"Is your name Daniel Riva?" asked the judge, in a voice which trembled somewhat.

"Yes, sir."

"And you are the son — ?"

"Of Peter Riva, ex-keeper of the lighthouse at Cette."

"Is it possible?" murmured Mr. Martin.

After a few moments' reflection, he added: —

"John, remove the prisoners; and you, Bob, do your duty."

At the last words a powerful fellow went up to Mateo, seized him in his arms, and, in spite of his desperate resistance, marched him up the rounds of a ladder resting against a branch of the gum-tree. Then, jumping down, he pulled away the ladder, and the assassin, hanging by the neck, swung aimlessly about over the heads of the crowd, who greeted his awful convulsions with frantic cheers.

Daniel hid his face in his hands to avoid this fearful sight.

The two cabin boys were no sooner left alone in the stable which served as their prison than Penguin, in spite of his usual generosity, could not help exclaiming: —

"So you knew that scoundrel?"

"I am a disgrace to you, I suppose, dear Martial," said Daniel bitterly. "Yes, I did know that abominable Mateo, and he was right when he said that I was once his accomplice, — an involuntary accomplice, it is true, but still the partner in his guilt. I concealed this from you be-

cause I was ashamed of it, as of all the many other misdeeds which I have confessed to you. You see what friends I had: Mateo Puig the smuggler, and Dominic Martigues the thief, both assassins. One led me to take my first step aside from the path of duty, the other urged me on in my evil course. These two men have been my evil geniuses, and I now see whither they would have conducted me. My father was right when he said: 'No fault can be considered small.' I was only lazy, but laziness led me to long for wealth and happiness without trouble or work, and to gain this end I became the tool of desperate men. It was you, Martial, who first opened my eyes to the true duty of mankind in this world, — you, who have always worked hard, lifting up your head with fresh courage whenever fate dealt you a staggering blow. If God grant that my judges acknowledge my innocence, you shall be my model from this day forth. I looked for a treasure, and I have found it, or, rather, let me say, you gave it to me; for henceforth I will have no fortune save that which my labor may procure me."

"Well said, Daniel!" exclaimed Penguin. "I have often told you that you were better than you supposed. All memory of the past must be rubbed out, now that the witnesses of your weakness have received their meet punishment. We will work together, you shall be my brother, and we will be happy."

"But if the sheriff brings me in guilty?"

"That is impossible. They shall hang me before they lay a finger upon you."

At this moment the door opened, and John came in.

"Follow me," said he. "Mr. Martin wishes to examine you. But, by the bye," he added, "the sheriff ordered me to relieve you of your bonds."

And the gaoler grumblingly untied the ropes that bound their wrists.

The crowd had scattered, but Mateo's body still dangled from the branch.

John, preceding the two cabin boys, led them through a courtyard, filled with servants, and ushered them into a large room on the lower floor of the house, where Mr. Martin sat at a table with Mr. Richard, the owner of the farm.

"Come in, gentlemen," said the sheriff kindly, "and sit down. This morning's agitation must have tried you severely, even if your long journey had not already fatigued you."

The poor boys were, indeed, exhausted, and they took seats, thanking the sheriff, who went on cheerfully: —

"You see I don't treat you like prisoners; but you must give me your promise not to leave the house until I permit it."

"We promise," said the Canadian simply.

"What is your name?" asked the sheriff. "I don't think you told me before."

"Martial Laverton, otherwise called Penguin, ex-cabin boy on board the Confederate vessel Atlanta."

"You speak French?"

"I am a French Canadian."

"Then we can speak our own language," said the judge in French. (The conversation had hitherto been in English.) "Mr. Richard Temple, my good neighbor here, is a Frenchman like myself, so that you may almost consider us your countrymen. If I still hold you comparative prisoners, it is not because I doubt your innocence. Mr. Martial's warm pleading quite convinced me; but your name, Daniel Riva, was all that was needed to confirm my conviction. I cannot believe that the son of my friend, Peter Riva, would ever turn thief and assassin."

"Do you know my father?" eagerly asked Daniel.

"Yes, my lad. I knew him well in my native city, Cette, where every one loved and respected him."

"Oh! how happy I am!" cried the boy, rising to press the hand which Mr. Martin held out to him.

"If I keep you here," continued the latter, "it is simply because, in my capacity as judge of this district, I cannot return the gold stolen from you by your companion Martigues, which was found in the possession of Mateo Puig, his murderer, — I cannot return it to you, I say, without making sure of your identity, and for this purpose I must write to Melbourne. Now, it will take the messenger some time to go and to return."

While Mr. Martin was speaking Daniel seemed to be considering something. At last he asked the sheriff: —

"Did n't you say that you came from Cette?"

"To be sure, my boy."

"Very well; then you may be able to do me a great favor by helping me to find the rightful owner of this gold, the cause of so many crimes."

"I don't understand," said Mr. Martin. "Did n't you and your comrade here find this gold in a placer near the Murrumbidgee, as you told me this morning?"

"Certainly, sir; but the gold is not ours. It belongs to Mr. Moreau, to Mr. Bastien Moreau, of Cette, or rather to his widow."

"What do you mean?" cried the sheriff, in a faltering voice.

"Here is the story in a nut-shell," answered Daniel. "Mr. Bastien Moreau, returning from Australia, was shipwrecked on the coast of France, near Cape Cerberus, close by the village where my father lives. I was so fortunate as to save him from the vessel where he was left by his companions, who thought him killed by the fall of a mast. Unhappily, the poor man did not survive his injuries, and he died in my arms at my father's house. Before he died he confided to me a portfolio containing valuable papers, begging me to give it his wife, whom he supposed to be still living in Cette. I went to that city, but could not find Mrs. Moreau. The portfolio itself was stolen from

me by Dominic Martigues, who was killed this morning by Mateo Puig, of my village. Accidentally, one document escaped the robber's clutch, and this very paper contained the plan which enabled my friend and myself to discover a treasure."

"So then," interrupted Mr. Martin, "you regard this treasure as belonging to Mrs. Moreau?"

"Certainly," said Daniel. "That is Martial's opinion, and it is also mine. Is n't it yours?"

"You are good, honest boys!" cried the sheriff, with moistened eyes. "What you consider a mere act of honesty is a grand and noble deed; for you have done it sincerely and with your whole heart. You will yet receive the reward which you deserve."

"But it is a very slight thing," said the Canadian. "And the only reward which Daniel asks is to find the lawful owner of this fortune."

"You say that the portfolio was stolen from you?" said Mr. Martin, evidently disturbed.

"It was taken from me," Daniel replied; "but Dominic, not finding the secret which he sought, returned it to me."

"And you still have it?"

"Here it is," said Daniel, taking the portfolio from his bosom. "It shall never leave my hands again until I can put it into those for which it was intended."

Mr. Martin, breaking down completely, rose, and, throwing his arms round Daniel, said: —

"Come, let me embrace you! Bastien Moreau was one of my best friends. He atoned cruelly and long for a temporary misdeed; but I will aid you to accomplish his last wishes. I will go home, and begin my search at once. Stay here to-night. To-morrow my friend Richard will bring you to my house; for I wish you to be my guests."

And embracing Daniel once more, the good sheriff pressed Penguin's hand, and hastily left the room to conceal the emotion which brought tears to his eyes.



"The boys were galloping by the side of their host."

CHAPTER XXV.

FRENCH CREEK.

When Daniel sat down that night at the table around which Mr. Richard daily assembled all the men employed on the farm, when he looked at the abundant but simple meal which brought a smile of pleasure to the bright faces of the laborers, he again wondered if he were not the victim of a dream. But no. His dear friend Martial was beside him, eating the farm fare with a good relish, and chatting pleasantly with their host. What an eventful day! How tragically it began, and yet it ended amid joy and laughter.

Even the terrible John had made friends with his former prisoners.

"Who would ever have thought," he said to Daniel, with a broad grin, "that we should be supping together to-night? I took you for regular villains this morning. It would n't have required much to make me blow out your brains with my revolver. What mistakes people do make in this world! Mr. Richard told us a little while ago that you were the son of a friend of Mr. Martin, the richest and most respectable man in the place."

Daniel longed to know who this Mr. Martin was, who had lent them such timely aid; but he dared not question John, and waited until he could obtain further particulars from Mr. Richard.

Supper done, the laborers left the room; and the boys were alone with their host, who said kindly: —

"I hope that you have quite recovered from the agitations of the day. There is nothing like a nice long nap and a good dinner to set a couple of sturdy boys like you on your legs again. I must say you owe a great deal to Mr. Martin; for, if it had n't been for him I fancy your former friendship with the murderer of Martigues would have put you in a pretty pickle. In this country, where law scarcely exists and where robbers are plenty, our justice is expeditious, and more than one man as innocent as yourselves has undoubtedly paid dear for some such mistake."

"I shall never forget what Mr. Martin has done for us as long as I live," said Daniel.

"And I may add," continued Mr. Richard, "that he is not a friend to be sneezed at. He came scarcely two years ago, and settled in our valley, and now he is the richest squatter in Victoria. They say that he has more than ten thousand head of cattle. Last year he sent at least twenty wagon-loads of wool to Melbourne."

"How did he make so much money in so short a time?" asked Penguin, struck with wonder at this account.

"Oh!" said Mr. Richard, "he does not owe it to his own industry alone. French-Creek Farm was settled ten years or more ago by one of our compatriots, Mr. Belesta, who made a great fortune in mining, and left this estate to his widow, Mr. Martin's sister; so that he is rather the overseer than the owner of French Creek. Thanks to his skilful care, the property is increasing in value every day. You can judge for yourselves to-morrow. There is not a handsomer house or a finer park in Australia."

"Mr. Martin invited us to spend several days with him," said Daniel reflectively.

"I fancy," replied Mr. Richard, "that you will both be welcome to stay there as long as you like. If the sea has no claims upon you, and if the pleasant but rough life of a squatter pleases you, my neighbor will be glad to engage two such smart assistants."

"Is the squatter's life a very hard one?" asked Penguin.

"Heavens, no!" said Mr. Richard. "Our business is extremely simple. It merely consists in guarding from the attacks of wild dogs or of thieves, the sheep and cattle which graze freely over the vast prairies around us. Our shepherds, instead of following their flock, as in Europe, leaning calmly upon their crook, gallop perpetually over the plains, with a gun slung across their back, and whip in hand. The gun is to destroy the prairie-dogs, a species of wolf, which carry off our sheep by hundreds, and the kangaroos, which devour our grass; with the whip the stockman — as we call the herdsman — the stockman pursues runaway cattle, and drives them back to their proper pasture. We lead a rough life, I can tell you; but those who have once tried it are never willing to give it up for any other. Life in the open air, skimming through space on the back of a swift horse, swooping down with uplifted whip on some angry animal, conquering him and managing him as you will, bringing every nerve and muscle in your body into constant play, — all this, I assure you, is far superior to the feverish existence of a city, or even to the disguised slavery of a seafaring life."

"For my part," enthusiastically exclaimed Daniel, "I long to turn squatter. How do you feel, Martial?"

"I should be only too glad if Mr. Martin would take me," answered the Canadian.

"Then, that is not all," resumed Mr. Richard, who loved

to dilate on the details of a squatter's life. "You ought to be here when the sheep are brought back to the farm. They come flocking in from every point of the compass, driven by men on horseback, cheerily cracking their whips. The sheep are folded, and the shearers set to work. When evening comes, the woolly fleeces lie mountain-high before the barns; then tables are laid, the men eat and drink and make merry, — they dance, and forget all their past calamities.

"But it is late. We must go to bed, gentlemen; you must feel the need of rest after such an eventful day."

What a comfortable night our two friends spent under Mr. Richard's hospitable roof! They thought that they had never slept between fresher, whiter sheets. The sun was high in the heavens when Mr. Richard came into their room, and woke them pleasantly.

"Come, up with you!" he cried. "I promised Mr. Martin that we would be at French Creek early, and we have a long ride before us."

The boys were ready in a few minutes, and were soon galloping off on spirited steeds by the side of their host.

The country through which they passed looked like a real English park. The prairie stretched before them like a broad lawn, adorned with occasional clumps of beautiful trees. Copious streams murmured over the stones over-

grown with rushes and weeds. Cattle browsed in picturesque groups on every side.

The view recalled the valley of the Glenelg to our heroes, and they told Mr. Richard of their great surprise on first seeing kangaroos. Daniel was thus led to speak of Mr. Friday, who guided them out of the desert, and escorted them to Melbourne.

"Why, I know your Mr. Friday, with his everlasting 'Good man,'" cried Mr. Richard. "When I settled in this country savages were very plenty, and they tried to oppose our taking possession. The greater part of them were forced to yield to us, and went farther north, into the wastes beyond the Murray. Mr. Belesta, who was a mild and amiable fellow, was more considerate towards these natives than we were. He granted them land on his claim. A small tribe settled there, and still remains. Your 'Good man' must, I think, be the chief of this tribe. Like all his race, he dislikes a sedentary life; and he often goes off with his family on lengthy expeditions, from which he faithfully returns to French Creek. You must have met him on one of these sprees; and you may say that you owe your escape to Mr. Belesta's humanity, for an ordinary Australian native would never have taken you to Melbourne."

Two hours after the riders left the farm, the high thatched roofs of a group of houses appeared through the trees. This was French Creek.

Mr. Martin was awaiting them impatiently. They had no sooner dismounted than he clasped them in his arms, saying: —

"You have come at last. I thought you would never get here!" Somewhat surprised at this affectionate reception, the two cabin boys followed their new-found friend, who, crossing the broad piazza which surrounded the house, led them into an elegantly furnished parlor.

A middle-aged lady sat in the centre of the room, and beside her was a young girl, with long, fair hair, a pretty creature of fifteen or sixteen years.

"Sister," said Mr. Martin, in a trembling voice, as he stepped up to the elderly lady, "here are the heroes of the delightful story which I told you last night, Mr. Daniel Riva and Mr. Martial Laverton."

The lady slowly advanced to meet the French boy, saying as she did so: —

"I am most grateful to you, Mr. Riva — "

But sobs interrupted her words. Throwing her arms around his neck, she covered his face with kisses.

"My child," she whispered, "I am she whom you seek."

The young man's emotion was so great on hearing these words that he felt his legs giving way beneath him. But Mr. Martin had already snatched him from his sister's embrace, and pressed him to his own heart with stifling warmth.

"Yes, it is she," he repeated. "This is my sister, poor Bastien Moreau's widow."

Mrs. Moreau then kissed poor Penguin in his turn, saying: —

"Let me thank you too, sir; for I know all that you did yesterday for your poor friend."

After a few moments of effusion, when every one had been embraced to his heart's content, at Mrs. Moreau's request Daniel gave a minute account of the wreck of the Australian ship, Bastien's rescue, his death, and his last words. In conclusion, he drew the portfolio from his bosom and handed it to the poor widow, saying: —

"Although I broke my promise, and opened this portfolio, I was bitterly punished; and I hope, madam, that you will forgive me."

"You require no forgiveness," said the good lady. "Let me now explain why you did not find me at Cette when you sought me there.

"My poor husband wrote to us several times, begging us to come out and join him in this country, where he had made a large fortune. But my brother, Mr. Martin, opposed our going, or rather he dreaded to have me undertake so long a journey alone with my dear Madeline. In his devotion to us, he finally determined to accompany us himself. We accordingly left Cette June 14, 1863, and set sail for Australia. On reaching Melbourne, what was our dismay to learn that my husband, who had

assumed the name of Belesta here, his mother's name, had started for France three months previous. Knowing that his only object in doing so was to bring us back with him, we could do nothing but quietly await his return. Two months later a dispatch informed us that the ship which conveyed him to France, the Clyde, was lost, with every man on board. Not one passenger escaped the disaster; even their bodies were swallowed up by the sea.

"My grief knew no bounds. At first I thought of returning to France. But my husband had invested all his property in this country in stock difficult of conversion into money. By my brother's advice I decided to remain. We settled at French Creek. One thing added wormwood to my bitter cup, and that was that I knew nothing concerning my beloved husband's death. I neither knew the mode of his death, nor whether his body received pious burial. So you can easily imagine my joy when my brother told me yesterday of your almost miraculous advent. To you I owe the supreme consolation of my sorrow, — the last memory of my husband. As for the treasure which you discovered at such a cost and at the risk of your life, I am only too glad to offer it to you and your generous comrade, Mr. Martial."

"I regret, madam," said Penguin hastily, "that we cannot accept this gold."

"And why not, my child?" asked Mrs. Moreau. "You

must know that I do not need the money in the least. My fortune is amply sufficient for all my wants."

"That may be, madam," said the Canadian; "but we do not need it either. Two cabin boys like ourselves would not know what to do with such a sum."

"The only thing which we ask," added Daniel, "is permission to remain here and earn an honorable living by our work. Formerly I had but one wish, — to acquire sudden riches without labor; but I know now what such wicked thoughts have brought upon me."

"Very well," said Mrs. Moreau, with a smile. "I will insist no more. Your wish shall be granted. You shall remain here and share in our labors; but you will at least permit me, I hope, to consider you as my sons. If my poor Bastien justly told you 'that every fault is punished sooner or later," I, in my turn, tell you that a good action never goes unrewarded."



"Peter angrily flung the letter into the fire."

CHAPTER XXVI.

"ALL 'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL."

SEVEN years have passed since the day when Daniel bade farewell to his native village. The years have vanished, and yet nothing seems to have changed in Castel. Peter Riva, upright and alert in spite of his white hair, still pursues his arduous calling, loved and respected by all; and although good Antoinette has not ceased sighing for her boy's return, she is somewhat consoled by the thought

that he is happy away from her, and that she has every reason to be proud of him.

Every month the mail brings news from remote Australia to the village. Sometimes Daniel himself sends his parents long pages, filled with expressions of love; and sometimes kind Mr. Martin relates the prowess of his *protégé*. If we may believe the worthy sheriff's tales, Daniel is the best squatter in Victoria.

"I know but one young man in the country," he says in one of his letters, "who is equal to our Daniel in intellect, energy, and sagacity; and that young man is his friend Martial, or Penguin, as he laughingly dubs himself. It was indeed the hand of Providence that sent these two lads to me at an opportune moment, and I cannot tell how I should get along without them now. Thanks to them, we have extended our pasture-lands to the Murray, and our wool-crop has doubled since they came. Therefore, my dear Mr. Riva, we all unite once more in begging you to come out and join your son in Australia. We have plenty of room, depend upon it, and your arrival will complete our family circle."

But every time that Mr. Martin returned to the subject in his letters, Peter said: "I am too old to change my country. I have fastened my shell to these rocks, and here I shall die."

Antoinette would gladly have braved every danger and crossed every sea in the world to see her son again; but,

yielding to her husband's will, she merely said: "Daniel will come back."

One day Peter said, in his turn: "Daniel must come back."

For grave events were now stirring the country, which appealed to all its children for aid. War was no sooner declared on the fifteenth of July, 1870, than one disaster followed so fast upon another that in six weeks France was left without an army. Every man of spirit rushed into the ranks, and those who lived in foreign lands hastened home to take their places with their fathers and brothers.

"Daniel must come back," repeated Peter Riva. And when the news came of the defeat at Sedan, the old pilot wrote to his son, and ordered him to return instantly to France.

September was drawing to a close, and Peter's impatience grew greater every day. In vain did old John Cerdagnol join with Antoinette to allay his anger by telling him that reckoning the time necessary for the delivery of the letter, together with that of the voyage from Australia to France, even by the rapid way of the Suez Canal, Daniel could not be there for two months yet.

"I don't care a bit," obstinately answered Peter. "My son did not need my letter to teach him his duty: he ought to be here, that's all I know."

At last, on the first of October, the postman brought Peter a paper, and at the same time a letter post-marked

Melbourne. The paper was an order for Daniel Riva to join the Second Battalion of light troops in garrison at Lyons, without delay. The letter was from Mr. Martin. Peter glanced through the first lines.

"In view of the weighty resolution which we are on the point of making," wrote Mr. Martin, "I feel that the time has at last come to break the silence which I have hitherto observed in a matter of the utmost importance to your son's future. Daniel started yesterday for Melbourne—"

"At last!" cried Peter, and he turned the page with a trembling hand; but the letter went on:—

"—whence he will return next week."

"What does this mean?" exclaimed the pilot; and he read eagerly on. Mr. Martin informed Peter that Mrs. Moreau had decided to take the two young men into partnership; and, moreover, having noticed Daniel's lively affection for Madeline, she was ready to give him her daughter's hand.

"I cannot doubt," concluded Mr. Martin, "that you will consent to the match. Daniel is nearly twenty-two years old; Madeline is eighteen. I assure you they will make the prettiest pair imaginable. Need I say that my charming niece is one of the chief conspirators in the plot against our handsome cabin boy of the Atlanta, our brilliant squatter on the Murray?"

"It's no time to talk of marrying now," cried Peter

angrily, flinging the letter into the fire. "What do I care for the Atlanta, the Murray, or for all Australia put together! Every drop of blood in my veins belongs to France; and if my son denies his debt, I must pay it for him, despite my white hair."

"But you cannot go to the war," said Antoinette, trembling from head to foot.

"My son must have a substitute," replied the old man, "and I have none to give but myself. The thing is settled: I shall enlist to-morrow."

Night came. Antoinette lighted the candle, and began to lay the table for the evening meal. The poor woman hid her tears as best she could; for her husband had spoken, and she knew that nothing would shake his resolve.

Would fate deprive her of this last loyal companion of her life, and leave her alone, childless and husbandless?

At this moment the door opened, and a young man, in handsome travelling dress, entered the room. Respectfully removing his hat, and thus displaying a mass of light, silky curls waving loosely about a face full of kindness and amiability, he said to the astonished couple: —

"I hope you will excuse my sudden entrance; but I knocked several times at the door, and no one came."

"What do you want, sir?" said the old fisherman.

"Mr. Peter Riva," said the stranger.

"I am he."

"Well, sir, I reached Marseilles from Melbourne yesterday, and did not wish to delay longer bringing you news of your son."

"My son is well?" cried the mother.

"Perfectly well, madam."

"What do I care?" said Peter, in a sulky tone. "Are you a Frenchman?"

"Yes and no," replied the stranger. "I am a Canadian; but I consider France as the home of my ancestors, and in that quality I claim the right of serving her."

"That is right, sir," said the pilot, offering his hand warmly to the young stranger; "but my son is a Frenchman, and what is devotion in you is simply duty in him."

"Who says that your son is not as ready to serve his country as I am?" replied the young man.

For some time Antoinette had not taken her eyes from the stranger's face, and at these words she hurried towards him, and seizing him by the arm, exclaimed: —

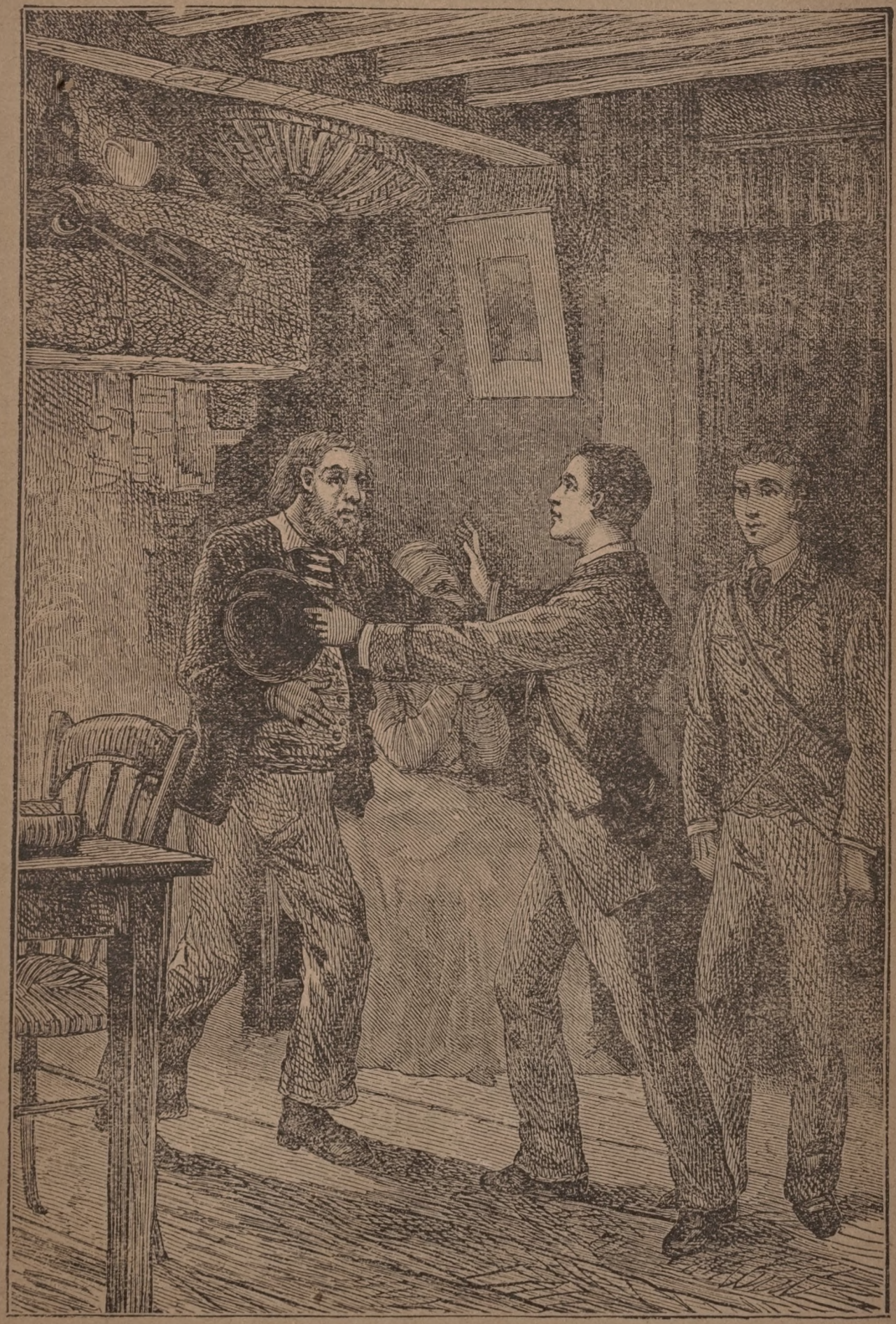
"You are Martial, the cabin boy of the Atlanta, Daniel's friend and comrade!"

"The very same, madam."

"Then my son is here! He would never have let you come without him."

The words were scarcely out of her mouth when she was clasped in two strong arms, while a joyful voice cried in her ear: —

"No, indeed, dear mother, Martial did not come alone."



"He saw his father standing by the hearth with outstretched arms." — Page 357.

And Daniel, who had hitherto hidden behind the door, lovingly embraced his almost fainting mother. After showering her with kisses, he seated her tenderly in the old arm-chair; then, turning, he saw his father standing by the hearth with outstretched arms. The pilot's eyes were full of tears, and pressing his idolized son to his heart, he murmured: —

"Forgive me, for I doubted you."

The evening was very short to the happy parents. Daniel and Penguin spent the entire night in telling their adventures; then next morning they left Castel to join the army.

Two days after, they were enrolled in General Bourbaki's regiment. But why return to those melancholy days, during which France seemed to expiate all her past folly by cruel suffering?

The army of the East, surrounded in its turn by an enemy of ten times its own numbers, was forced to retreat rapidly across snow-capped mountains. The Swiss frontier was at hand, and there charitable hands received the unfortunate soldiers, as many of whom perished by cold as by the sword of the Uhlans.

On the last day of the retreat Martial fell, his breast pierced by a bullet, but Daniel managed to carry his friend off on his back, and bore him beyond the frontier.

The poor, wounded Canadian was taken to a hospital in Bern, where Daniel nursed him tenderly, watching and

hoping for the return to life and strength confidently promised by the surgeon.

At last the longed-for day arrived. On a glorious spring morning Martial opened his eyes once more. His glance, at first vacant, dazzled by the strong sunshine, wandered vaguely about the room; it soon fell upon Daniel. Then the Canadian recognized his friend, stretched out his arms to him, and the two were clasped in a long and tender embrace.

"First of all," said Daniel to the wounded man, "let me give you what the general sent you the other day." And he handed him a medal.

"The medal for me? Oh! this is too much happiness," cried the Canadian. "Besides, you deserve it far more than I do, — you, who fought like a hero, and who carried me from the field of battle amid a rain of bullets. For this time," he added, with a smile, "you cannot deny that you saved my life."

"Oh! only once," said Daniel merrily. "I am by no means even with you yet, and I hope I shall never have occasion to fully pay my debt. As for the medal, you earned it a hundred times over in the battles before our rout. So, keep it: it is only your due. And to-morrow, when you are up and dressed, as the doctor says you may be, you can pin it on your coat to receive Mrs. Moreau — "

"Mrs. Moreau?" interrupted Martial.

"Yes, Mrs. Moreau and Mr. Martin and my father and my dear mother. They have all been here for two months, and we have only been waiting for you to get well to celebrate my marriage to Madeline."

"Oh! this splendid budget of news will soon set me on my feet again."

"So we all hope, and I more than any one else," said Daniel.

"Forgive me," said the Canadian, with some hesitation, "but do you intend to return to Australia?"

"Gracious, no! my dear fellow. France needs all her sons now. Mrs. Moreau has sold the property at French Creek, and has obtained a large grant of land in Algeria for us, where we can use our squatter experience to great advantage."

"And what shall I do?" timidly asked Martial.

"You! Why, you will go with us! Aren't you half-owner of the new estate? How could I live without you, to whom I owe all that I am, all that I have? Though you have forgotten it so soon, I shall always remember that your example saved me from infamy and ruin by showing me that happiness in this world can only be founded on industry and honesty."

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